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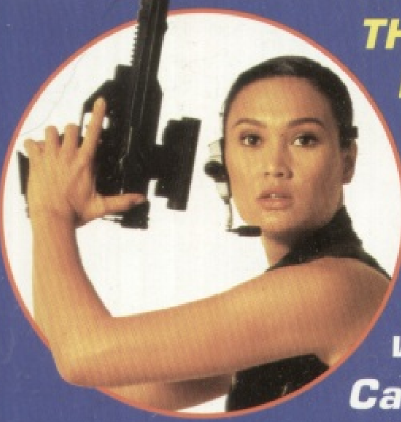

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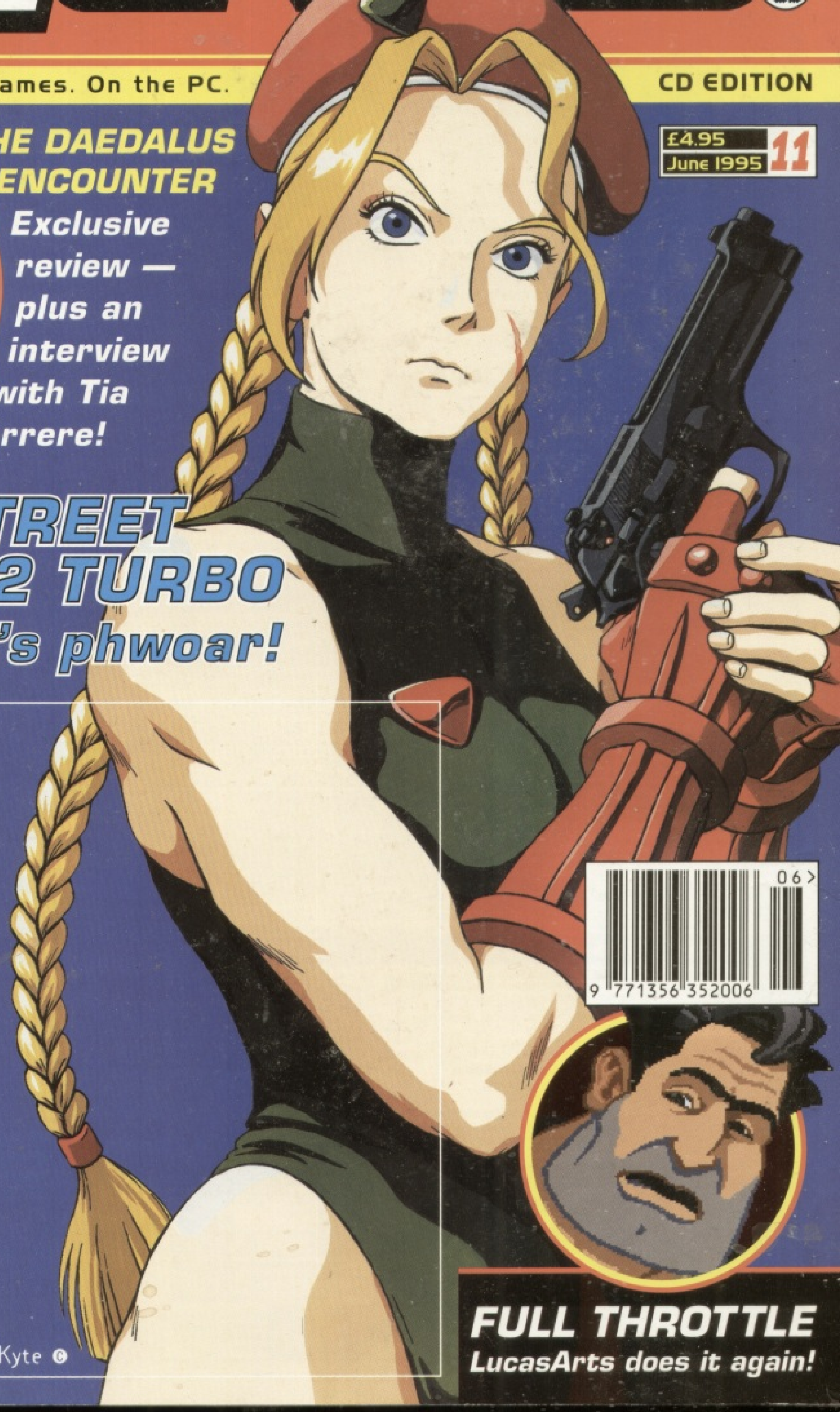

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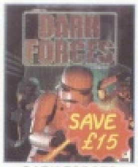

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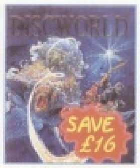

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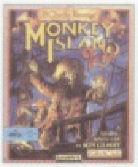
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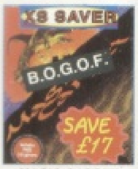

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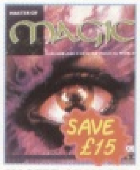

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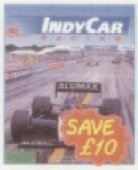

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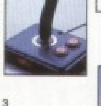

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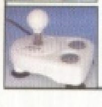

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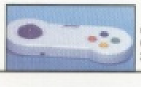

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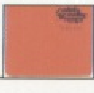

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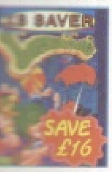

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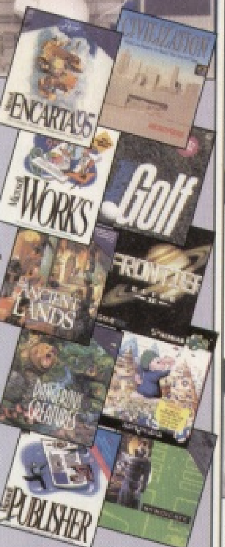

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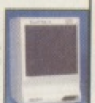

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My God, it's finally happened! After fighting tooth and nail with the powers that be, we've finally got a Pentium! And what a beast it is too. Just imagine a 90MHz Pentium with 16Mbs of RAM, a quad-speed CD-ROM and a hard drive with more space than a Sainsbury's car-park. It really is a beauty, and has allowed us to experience the likes of Flight Unlimited and Slipstream in all their glory.

But wait. Just because we're lucky enough to have one of these monster machines, don't think for a minute that we'll neglect those of you with 486s, or 386s for that matter. As always, we will endeavour to test *every* game on a broad range of machines to see what the difference in processing power actually makes, so hopefully SX25 owners won't feel understandably cheated because a game we reviewed on a Pentium runs unbearably slow on thier PC.

However, it's becoming a more common sight that games are Pentium recommended, so now seems like an excellent time to upgrade. Until the next time, start saving!

Dave Upchurch,
Editor.

WIN!
A speedy SuperKart, courtesy of Virgin! Motor to page 20 now!

6 Disks!
Comprehensive instructions on how to load and play every demo on PC GAMES' fabled coverdisks can be found by turning to page 6 now!

12 News
Check up on the recent developments and latest gossip from the games industry in this month's hotter-than-Hades news section.

22 You've Never Seen Anything Like It!
We flew across to Acclaim US to see how its revolutionary Motion Capture techniques are being used to great effect in the forthcoming Alien Trilogy.

25 Previews
Just as Barry Norman gets to see all the latest films before they hit the streets, we take a look at some of the more impressive games due for release in the next few months.

47 Reviews
In this month's packed reviews section we check out GameTek's near-perfect conversion of Super Street Fighter II Turbo, pausing only to drool over Tia Carrere as struts her stuff in the The Daedalus Encounter.

When The Show Comes To Town....................39
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78 CD Updates
As CD-ROM becomes more popular, could this be the last CD Updates ever?

80 Budget Reviews
Save cash by consulting this month's budget reviews to see what's cooking on the mid-price software scene.

84 Yours... For Less Than A Fiver!
Alex Simmons explores the streets of Shareware City and finds handful of games for less than the price of a Fosters four-pack.

86 Subcriptions
Look — free games! It's true, with every subscription you get a free game along with a year's supply of your favourite bedtime read.

Super Street Fighter II Turbo....................70
At last PC owners can play a decent beat-'em-up without buying a console, thanks to GameTek's awesome conversion of Super Street Fighter II Turbo.

Editor David Upchurch ● *Art Editor* Dave Kelsall ● *Reviews Editor* Alex Simmons ● *Designer* Peter Barrell ● *Contributors* Christina Erskine, Marcus Beer, Tony Cocks, Rik Henderson, Gordon Houghton, Martin Klimes, Simon Shaw, Andrew Wright and, er, 'Rad' ● *Cover Illustration* Steve Kyte ● *Systems Manager* Sarah-Jane Leavy ● *Advertising Manager* Marie Lawlor ● *Advertising Production* Tina Gynn ● *Editorial Director* David Kelly ● *Managing Director* Terry Pratt ● *Editorial and Advertising Offices* Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU; Tel: (0171) 972 6700, Fax: (0171) 972 6710 ● *Distribution* Frontline Ltd, Park Road, Peterborough PE1 2TR; Tel: (01733) 555161 ● *Subscriptions* Tower Publishing, Tower House, Sovereign Park, Lathkill St, Market Harborough, Leics LE16 9EF; Tel: (01858) 468888. Annual subscription rates (12 issues, incl. postage): UK & BFPO — £47.40(HD)/£59.40(CD); Overseas surface mail — £55(HD)/£67(CD); Airmail Europe & Eire — £65(HD)/£77(CD); Airmail Zones 1 & 2 — £95(HD)/£107(CD) ● Printed by TPL, 111 Hartlebury Trading Estate, Hartlebury, Nr Kidderminster, Worcs DY10 4JB ● *MonitorMan™ Logo* The Designers Republic ● No part of this magazine may be reproduced, stored in a data retrieval system or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher ● Cryptic quote: "Hello Dad" ● © EMAP Images 1995

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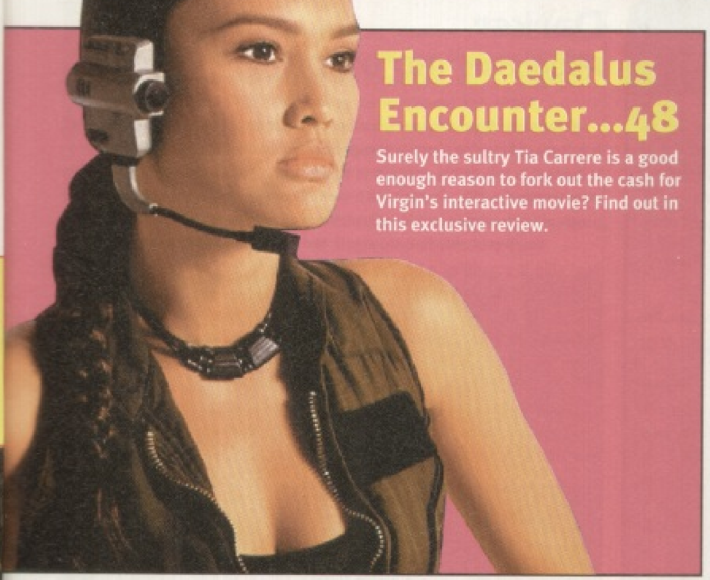

The Daedalus Encounter...48

Surely the sultry Tia Carrere is a good enough reason to fork out the cash for Virgin's interactive movie? Find out in this exclusive review.

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What do you mean you missed the last issue of PC GAMES? Turn to page 88 and make your collection complete.

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107 Dr Spanner's Bits 'n' PCs

PC GAMES' resident tech-head checks out a selection of utilities and gimmicks with which to upgrade the discerning gamer's monster machine.

110 The TroubleShooter

Feeling under the weather? Has your PC got a virus? Trubbsy has a remedy.

113 Letters

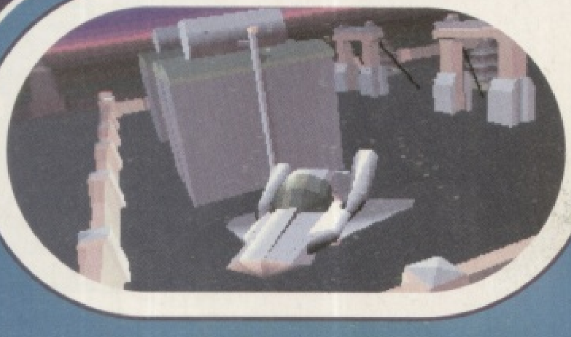
This is your chance to air your opinions, so what are you waiting for?

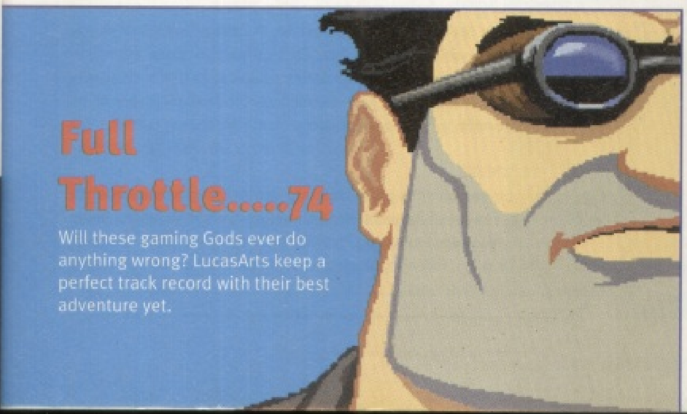
114 Next Month!

What will be in next month's issue? God knows, so we asked him...

Disks!

You've looked longingly at Cammy's shapely ti... erm, tights on the cover, now play with her in our excellent Super Street Fighter II demo. Floppy owners, take a trip into the future with CyClones and Psygnosis' neat blaster, Darker.





Full Throttle.....74

Will these gaming Gods ever do anything wrong? LucasArts keep a perfect track record with their best adventure yet.

DISKS!

What, another month gone by? But we've only just finished playing with the last CoverCD, we hear you cry. Well, we're not ones to let you sit about doing nothing, you know. Here's another batch of goodies for you to waste the next 30 days on. Read on...

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Most of these demos will run on a 486/SX PC (minimum), with VGA, at least 4Mb of RAM, DOS 5.0 or greater and a mouse. However, please note that The Last Dynasty, Warriors, The Orion Conspiracy and Ticonderoga all need SVGA, that The Last Dynasty requires at least 6Mb of RAM, and that The Last Dynasty and Slay need to be run under Windows 3.1.

How To Load Your Demos

In a move to make your CoverCD and HD disks friendlier than ever, we've standardised the entire thing. Now, the process for loading the games and demos is exactly the same for each.

(1) Loading From The HD Disks

Place the disk in your internal drive, and then log onto it by typing **A:**, **B:** or whatever the drive letter happens to be. Now enter **PCG** to run the disk menu. From here, it all gets easier; simply select the demo you wish to play with the cursor keys, and then press RETURN to install it. You'll be given instructions about how to run each game on the menu screen.

(2) Loading From The CoverCD

Place the CoverCD into your CD-ROM drive and then log onto it by typing **D:**, **E:** or whatever the drive letter happens to be. Now enter **PCG** to run the CoverCD menu.

Demos on the CD take one of two forms – they can either be run direct from the disk or will need to be installed onto your hard drive.The menu item itself will tell you what needs to happen with each demo. To play each of the demos, just select the item you want with the cursor keys, then press RETURN – the rest will be done for you.

In the case of a Windows game, such as The Last Dynasty, the menu will launch Windows and run the installer for you. You will need to exit Windows to get back to the main menu. Note that you must have set up a path to your Windows directory for this feature to work properly. If you haven't, go to the DOS prompt and enter **PATH=C:\WINDOWS** before running the CoverCD menu, assuming that Windows is stored in the **C:\WINDOWS** directory.

Cyclones
Mindscape (HD & CD)

CyClones is SSI's attempt at a Doom-beating 3D shoot-'em-up. Interestingly it's been programmed by Raven Software, the co-creators of the marvellous Heretic, so it's got pedigree. Opinion is divided about its merits, but here's a massive – and very tough – one-level demo for you to try out for yourselves...

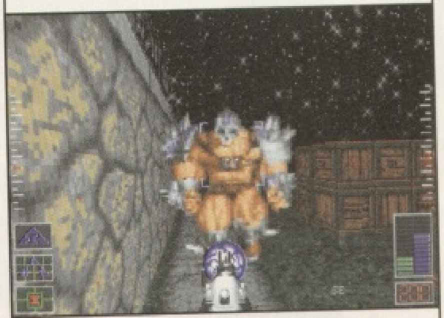
How To Play

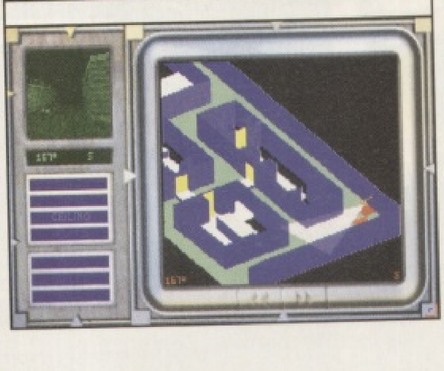
Full playing instructions are given in the **MANUAL.DOC** file, which you'll find in the CyClones game directory on your hard drive.

However, for those of you keen to get going straight away, let us explain that your movement is controlled with the numeric keypad, while the mouse or the cursor keys move the independently-controllable gunsight. By clicking with the right mouse button you can open doors, pick up any objects you find, search the bodies of dead baddies (if the cursor goes green, you'll know you've found something valuable).

By clicking with the right mouse button on the icons down each side of the main game screen you can access a map screen and an inventory. You can also change weapons by right-clicking on the ammo counter in the bottom right-hand corner of the screen, then clicking on the picture of the gun.

- To get sound in this demo, you must first configure the game to your system by running the **SOUND** program in the **C:\CYCLONES** directory. Once you've done that, enter **CYCLONES** to start playing the game.





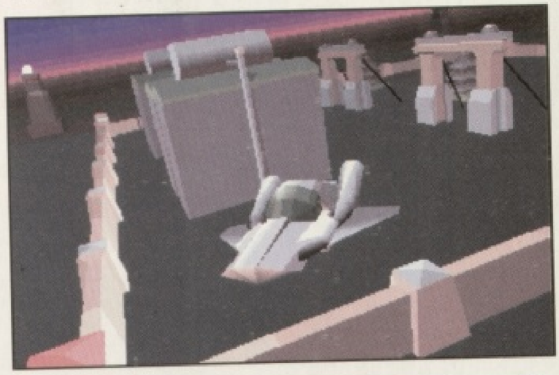
Darker
Psygnosis (HD & CD)

If futuristic flight sims are your cup of tea, then take a look at this. Darker is a story of hovering aircraft, engaged in combat above a city, and – boy! – is it good! In this demo, your aim is to take out all of the enemy craft that are threatening the city. To start with you only have one weapon, but as you progress you can gain homing missiles and all manner of other goodies.

You'll probably find staying in the air is quite tricky at first because your ship is controlled a bit like a glider – you'll find your precious energy constantly trickles away, plunging your ground-wards, and the only way to top it up is to fly over the glowing 'power towers'. However, do perservere, because once you get used to it the sensation of flying is superb!

How To Play

The game is controlled with either the mouse or the keyboard. Full instructions can be accessed from the game's menu screen. There's also a rolling preview of the sort of things you can expect to see in the labyrinths under the city!



Shareware Selection
Various (HD only)

SkyRoads

This is an excellent race-against-the-clock 3D game, in which you guide a tiny spaceship along assorted alien highways, each littered with pits, obstacles and coloured road-tiles which adversely affect your ship's performance. Full instructions on how to play can be accessed from the game's menu screen.

Laser Light

Remember Gremlin's old arcade puzzler Deflektor? Yes? Well, if you liked that then you'll love this! The aim is simple – place mirrors to bounce a laser beam around the obstacles on-screen so that it eventually hits a target. Puzzle-tastic! Full instructions on how to play can be accessed from the game's menu screen.

X-Fortress

Tetris clones are ten-a-penny, but this game adds a novel twist to the old theme. You see, here you control a rotating fortress slap-bang in the middle of the screen, and have to build walls from the blobs dropping down on all sides. Full instructions on how to play can be accessed from the game's menu screen.

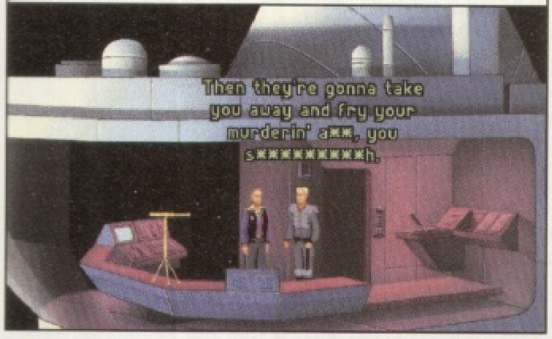
The Orion Conspiracy
Domark (CD only)

From Divide By Zero, the people that brought you Innocent Until Caught and Guilty, comes a whole new graphic adventure experience — The Orion Conspiracy. The big difference here is that this game is all viewed in glorious SVGA, and it looks great! In fact, you'll wonder why you were ever satisfied with chunky old VGA!

How To Play

The game can be played with either the mouse or the keyboard. The former is recommended for ease of play, but if you do choose the latter option, you move the pointer with the cursor keys, look at things and select options with RETURN and call up the icon panel with SPACE.

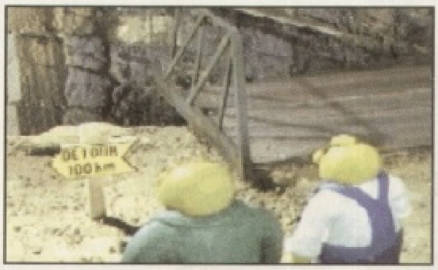
Moving the mouse pointer over certain items on-screen, such as the door or the console will cause their name to appear. Clicking with left mouse button now will either bring up a description of the item, or a selection of icons (if the item can be interacted with — such as the telescope on the tripod). Moving the mouse pointer over the icons reveals what they do, so you shouldn't have too much trouble getting to grips this one.

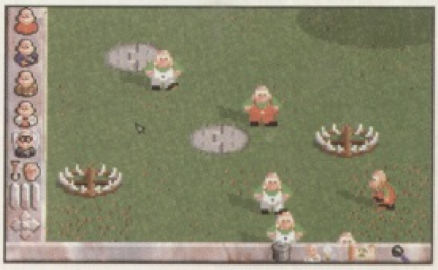

Then they're gonna take you away and fry your murderin' a**, you s***********h.

Baldies
GameTek (CD only)

Take The Settlers, mix it with a little Lemmings and why not even throw in a little bit of Sim Town. Then and only them might you have something that even vaguely resembles Baldies — one of the cutest but strangest god games to hit the PC. Take control of a city full of these little guys with no hair, and try to defeat all the other tribes in the area for the grand prize of world domination.

This is only a rolling demo of the game, but clearly demonstrates just how ingenious the game really is when it comes to object manipulation.





Warriors
Mindscape (CD only)

In the arcades Virtua Fighters is the standard for beat-'em-ups now, and it's Mindscape who are the first company to bring texture-mapped combat to the PC. Warriors is a one-on-one combat simulation in which you get to fight a massive array of different combateers across a variety of locations. This demo gives you two of the game's finished characters to play with (or play against, as the case may be).

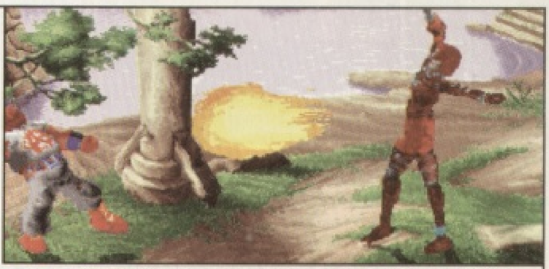
How To Play

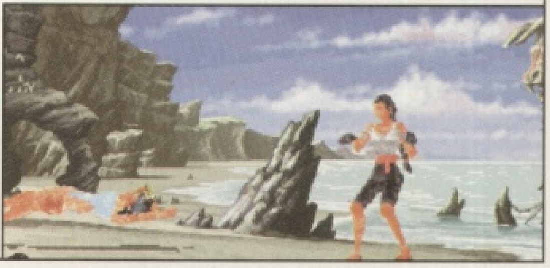
The game can be played with either joystick or keys:

	Player 1	Player 2
Up	Up cursor	E
Down	Down cursor	D
Left	Left cursor	S
Right	Right cursor	F
Punch	ENTER	TAB
Kick	SHIFT	CAPSLOCK

Press PAGE UP and PAGE DOWN to toggle between the two combat views. For more info, take a look at the **README.1ST** file in the **C:\WAR** directory.

● To get sound in this demo, you must first configure the game to your system by running the **INSTALL.COM** program in the **C:\WAR** directory and altering the options. Once you've done that, enter **WAR** to start playing the game.





ALERT! ALERT!
My disk is faulty!

Due to the massive number of disks duplicated, the odd one might be a touch faulty. If you're unlucky enough to get one of these, don't despair because help is at hand. Whatever you do DON'T SEND THEM TO US! Simply send them off to the following address with an SAE for 28p:

PC GAMES Bodged Disks,
Diskxpress,
Unit 7, Willow Court,
Bourton Industrial Park,
Bourton-on-the-water,
Gloucestershire GL54 2HQ.

If you think you can solve your problems over the phone, try calling the disk helpline on **(01451) 810788**. The helpline is open between 3pm and 5pm on weekdays.

Making A Boot Disk

If you're having problems running any of this month's floppy games try making a boot disk. Take a freshly formatted floppy disk, slap it into the disk drive (I'll assume it's drive A for the moment) and type: **SYS A:**. The system files will be transferred and within seconds you'll have a fully-functioning boot disk on your hands.

All you then need to do is leave the floppy in the disk drive, reset your PC and finally try loading the game again. Don't take the disk out of the machine as it boots up because you want the PC to read the information from the floppy rather than the hard disk.

What the... HELP!

All these demos require 4Mb of Expanded (EMS) memory to run and at least 590K of free base memory, except where stated otherwise in the System Requirements panel opposite. If you have this, not Extended memory (XMS), they shouldn't cause you any problems whatsoever.

● Except where specified, these demos do not work under Windows and may not be compatible with Doublespace, QEMM 386 or Stacker disk compression software.

The Fine Print Bit...

The PC GAMES coverdisks are rigorously checked for viruses, but coverdisks are used at the reader's own risk. PC GAMES can accept no responsibility for damage to either data or hardware caused by using the coverdisks.

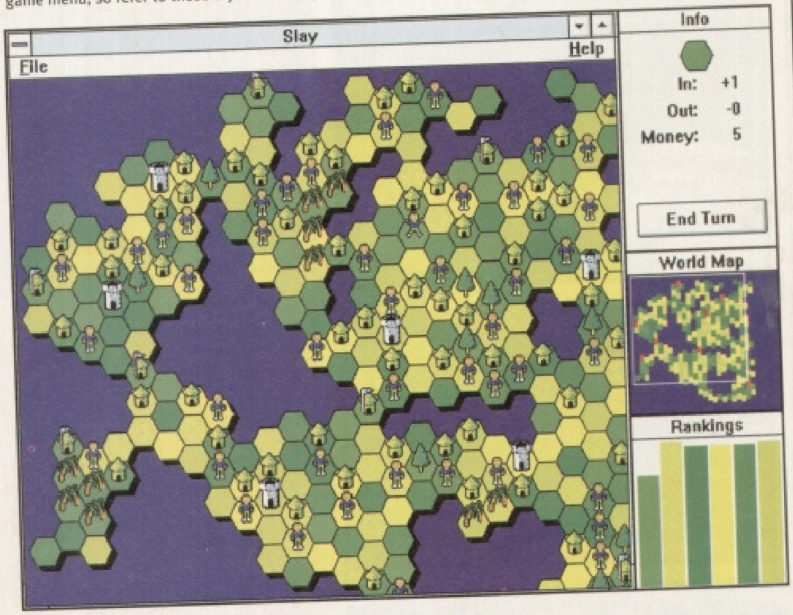
PC GAMES and its retailers are not liable for any unnotified changes to the contents of the coverdisks which may occur, okay?

Slay
Shareware (CD only)

This demo of an up-and-coming Windows strategy game was just so good, we had to include it on the CD. Like Risk, the aim is to take over a world map by moving units around a hexagonal terrain, capturing land as you go while trying to make enough money to keep your armies alive. The five computer opponents in this demo are also out to do the same, so you're going to have your work cut out just trying to keep the land you've already got, let alone take any more!

How To Play

The game is played with the mouse in Windows and there are full on-line instructions accessible from the game menu, so refer to those if you need any help.



Tank Commander
Domark (CD only)

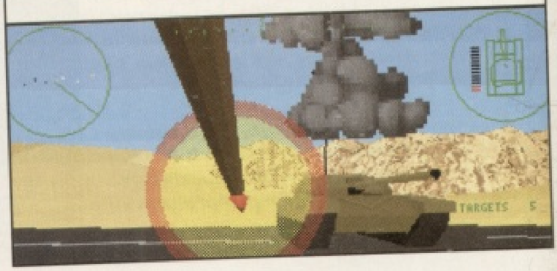
Up until now, Empire have held the fort when it comes to tank games, with the only real exception being the classic M1 Tank Platoon from MicroProse. Now Domark are rising to take the tower with their all-new polygon tank simulation, Tank Commander.

You control four tanks at once in a co-ordinated attack against a variety of targets, with the choice of taking direct control over the action or playing it in a more commanding vein, where the computer plays out the campaign under your direction.

How To Play

The game is controlled with the keyboard, using the following keys:

Forwards	Up cursor
Backwards	Down Cursor
Rotate left	Left cursor
Rotate right	Right cursor
Rotate turret right	DEL
Rotate turret left	PAGE DOWN
Reset turret to centre	PAGE UP
Raise/lower gun	HOME/END
Fire weapon	SPACE
Select Coax Machine Gun	Z
Select normal shells	X
Select HE Missiles	C
Select armour-piercing missiles	V
Select flame thrower	B
Select mine destroyer	N
Select homing missile	M
Summon air strike	TAB
Driver's view	F1
Gunner's view	F2
Commander's view	F3
Toggle between main views	F4
Outside view	F5
Outside view with maps and video	F6
Nightsight	F7
Select tactical recon screens	F8
Toggle graphic detail	F9
Select tank 1	1
Select tank 2	2
Select tank 3	3
Select tank 4	4



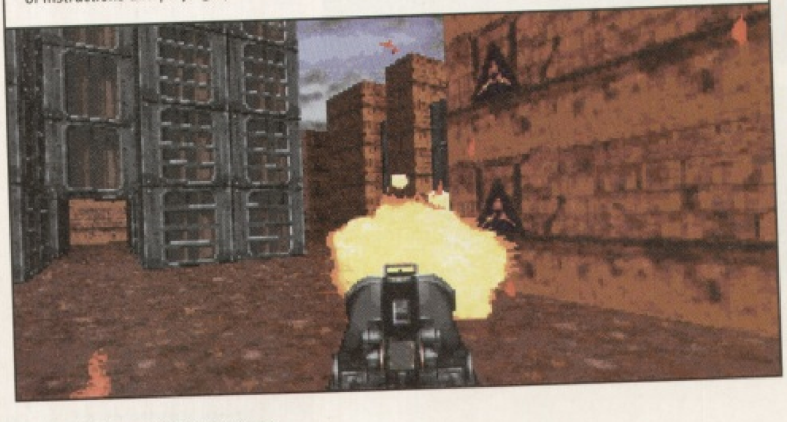
Rise Of The Triad
Apogee (CD only)

Some are saying that this is the game that finally destroys Doom. Rise Of The Triad takes the first person 3D adventure scenario, and introduces a whole new twist — platform game-style puzzles. Before you start thinking about Sonic The Hedgehog or Mario, though, I'll warn you that this is a little more violent than that. Okay, it's a lot more violent than that. You have been warned.

Anyway, as always the aim is to get to the end of each level and escape, but to do this you'll need to solve a number of puzzles, collect keys to open some doors and flick switches or stand on certain floor tiles to get pieces of scenery to move out of your way.

How To Play

The game is controlled with the keyboard, and anyone who has played Doom and its many clones should be able to get into things straight away. However, if you need a little more explicit help, go into the **C:\ROTT** directory on your hard drive and then enter **README** to bring up screen after packed screen full of instructions and playing tips.



USS Ticonderoga
Mindscape (CD only)

From Intelligent Games comes this in-depth naval strategy game. Ticonderoga places you in command of one of the US Navy's most powerful battleships, and this demo offers you three whole missions set in various locales around the world to try out. Are you man enough to do the job?

How To Play

Ticonderoga is controlled entirely with the mouse. The on-screen pointer will change shape as you move it around the screen to indicate when something can be interacted with – just click to do so. You can also hop around the ship by clicking on the icons at the bottom of the screen, and speed up or slow down time by clicking on the arrow icons.

Use keys '1' or '2' to bring up a map screen. You can zoom in and out using the arrow icons, and centre the map on any location by clicking with the right mouse button. Waypoints can be set clicking on a ship and then dragging the mouse with the left button held down.

Obviously, Ticonderoga is a big game and there's not the space to give you a full tutorial on how to play it here. However, the above should get you started and the interface is very intuitive, so you should be able to work it for yourself with a little effort.

The Last Dynasty
Sierra (CD only)

Coming soon from adventure specialists Sierra is this unusual space adventure cum 3D combat game. It stars two hapless heroes who get sucked into a raging interstellar war while trying to make the first human/alien contact – the fools! This demo features some attractive cutscenes taken from the game, as well as a brief playable mission to enjoy.

How To Play

After the short intro you'll find yourself plonked right in the middle of a massive space dogfight simulation. Use the mouse to guide yourself around, and the left mouse button to fire the lasers. In addition, you can use the cursor keys to look around the cockpit. Finally, hitting '5' toggles the HUD on and off, while hitting 'F8' brings up a space map.

Super Streetfighter II Turbo
GameTek (CD only)

Do you really need me to tell you what this is? Super Streetfighter 2 Turbo is the massively souped-up version of the arcade classic that spawned a thousand imitators. It's also possibly the fastest beat-'em-up ever to hit the home computer.

In this demo you have the choice of playing either Chun Li or Ryu in the USSR, but the finished game features all of the backdrops and characters of the original game. Sadly this demo features no background music, and only supports two-button joysticks/joypads.

How To Play

The game is played with either joystick or keyboard, and you will find full instructions in the **README** document that you can choose to display after the installation process.

Slipstream 5000
Gremlin Interactive (CD only)

Slipstream 5000 is a fast and furious 3D-racing game set in the distant future. Each player adopts the role of one of ten pilots, all competing in a gruelling ten-race season to become the Ultimate Slipstreamer.

The ten tracks feature famous locations around the world. You can zoom down the river Thames in London, or shoot past the Sphinx in Egypt. The only track featured in this demo is Arizona USA where you'll be flying at breakneck speed down a course constructed in the Grand Canyon.

How To Play

The game is played with joystick or keyboard. In the latter case, guide your nose with the cursor keys, then hit SPACE to accelerate, RETURN to fire your weapon and S to select a weapon. There is no brake (these are flying craft), but if you release the throttle you'll slow down quickly.

During the race, fly-through and demos of other tracks you can change camera views using the function keys as follows:

Cockpit	F1
Chase	F2
Rear	F3
TV	F4
Free	F5

When using the 'Free' camera you can view your ship from any angle and distance by using the INS, DEL, PAGE UP, PAGE DOWN, + and – keys on your numeric keypad.

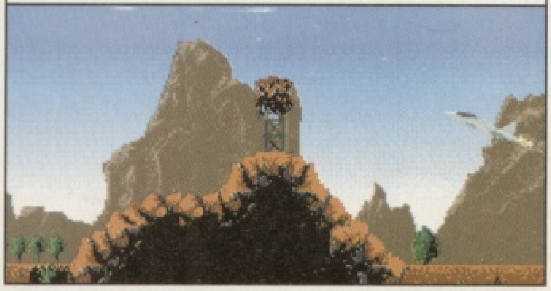
4
ENGINE DAMAGE
WEAPON
Blaster
CONTROL DAMAGE

Jetstrike
Rasputin (CD only)

Jetstrike was a phenomenally successful Amiga title, despite its quite basic look and gameplay, and now it's available for you to enjoy on PC. The aim of the game is to complete a series of missions of increasing difficulty in two main scenarios – combat and aerobatics. If you like you can go up against swarms of enemy craft, or if you just want to show off your prowess at the joystick you can try to pull off stunt moves for extra bonus points.

How To Play

The game is played with the keyboard and couldn't be simpler. To accelerate hold down the right SHIFT key (this needs to be kept down, as your airspeed will drop when you release it). The cursor keys are then used to rotate your plane in the two-dimensional airspace, with SPACE used to fire your weaponry.



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"A Final Unity" is an original intergalactic epic of mystery and danger that takes you from the outposts of Federation space through treacherous encounters with alien starships and beyond - into the uncharted dangers of a massive nebula.

Take control from the bridge or leave the ship to embark on critical Away Team missions. This interactive CD-ROM journey is a true extension of the famed TV series with accuracy in all details, including voice-overs by all seven of the television stars.

Beam your crew to mysterious planets. Manoeuvre the U.S.S. Enterprise™ through strange galaxies to worlds beyond your imagination. You're in command, working hand in hand with the most respected crew in the Federation!

No other space adventure comes close to the reality of this CD-ROM excursion which is brought to life by characters who speak to you, rich cinematic sequences, incredible SVGA graphics and CD-quality sound and music. Experience hours of entertaining exploration and discovery as you freely travel the universe to unravel a mystery from the ancient past in this STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION® epic.

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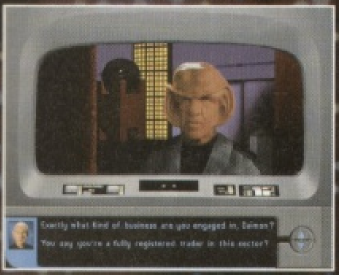
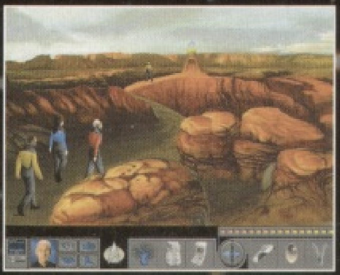
Tension boils on the bridge as another Red Alert appears imminent

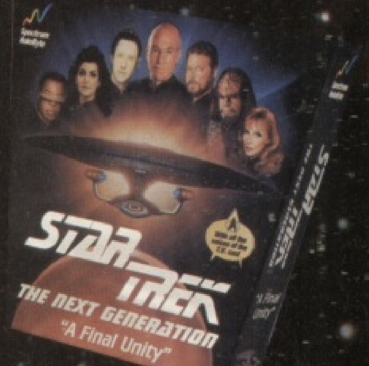
Alert your Away Team and pick the right combination of talent for each critical mission



Open hailing frequencies and prepare for the unexpected



Beam down to exotic worlds as the mystery of an ancient and highly advanced civilisation slowly unfolds.



Available for IBM CD-ROM

Also look for STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION® "Future's Past™" on Super NES.

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news

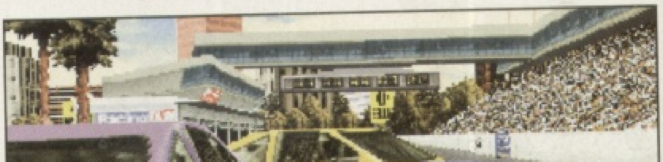
Psygnosis *Plays Tough*

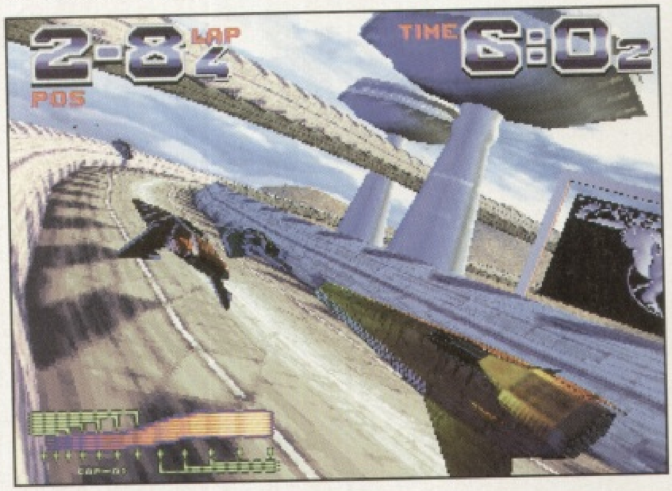
While some PC owners may be tempted to jump ship thanks to the recent enthusiastic press coverage of Sony's PlayStation console, the word from Psygnosis is simple: stay right where you are, because all the best PlayStation games will be coming out on the PC. This is, quite simply, great news. Although every game will require a minimum 66MHz 486 and a CD-ROM drive to run, they will be almost identical to their console counterparts.

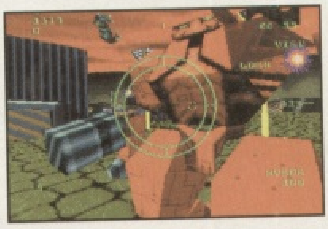
First up is Demolish 'Em Derby, a fast-moving 3D driving sim that crosses Daytona with Ridge Racer to produce a fantastic racing experience. The game can be approached in one of two way: either use your skill to pass the other drivers, or — better — bash them out of the way. As you can see, the game, still in its infancy, looks exceptional, and Psygnosis is confident that there'll be no noticeable loss of speed when compared to the PlayStation version.

Next comes Wipe-Out, another 3D racer, but this time set in the future. Again, those less proficient at driving have another way to claw their way to victory, as missiles and rockets can be fired at the other racers to hinder their progress. Wipe-Out can be described as the next generation version of Slipstream (reviewed this issue), making it one to watch out for.

Krazy Ivan will be the umpteenth robot combat sim out this year, but the early impression is it will be the best. Huge metal monsters must be pulverised into tiny pieces using a combo of weaponry and skill as you try to save humanity from an alien onslaught.



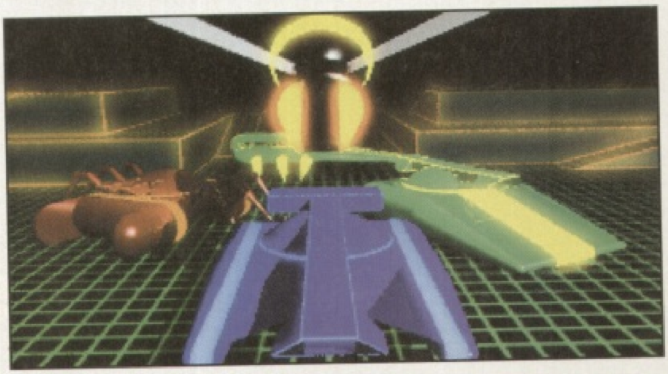




While most of the above games will reach fruition in the Autumn, two other titles have been pencilled in for a Christmas release. There's no info on Sentient, but the teaser ad in Psyggy's brochure are enough to send the hype machine into overload. And remember the computer-generated battles in Tron? Well, Assault Rigs looks set to bring this idea crashing into the 90s.

Rumour also has it that Namco will surrender the Ridge Racer rights to Psygnosis, so we'll hopefully see an official conversion of this top arcade racing game before the year's end.

Whilst today's technology dies on its feet, the PC has proved that it's a viable platform for 'Next Generation' titles. Hopefully, Psygnosis will single-handedly demonstrate that with a decent programming team, PlayStation games can be accurately converted to the PC and then others will soon follow suit. Now that really is something to get excited about.



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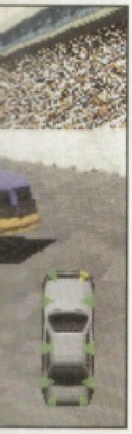

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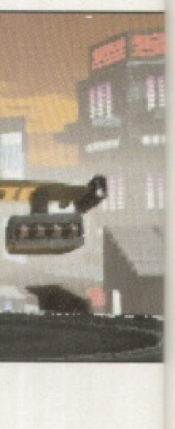
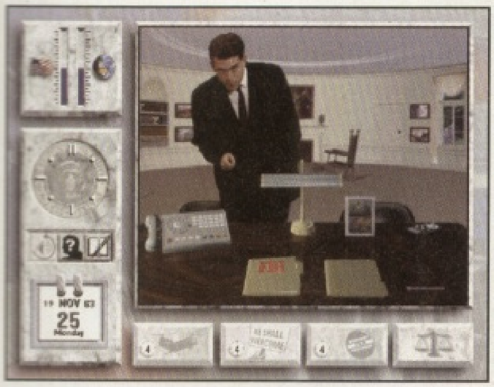




Assassination Attempt Fails!

Compton's NewMedia, publishers of many a decent multimedia package, is turning its hand to games — and its first foray into this over-crowded market is sure to raise an eyebrow or two.

You see, according to Compton's, John F. Kennedy did not die on November 22nd, 1963. The assassin's bullet that could have spilled half his brains over his doting wife's lap merely caused a minor flesh wound.

Sure, it's the stuff of pure fiction — and a great premise for a book — but it does raise a few important questions. For starters, JFK's victory in the imminent elections was by no means certain, so would he have been chucked out of the White House? And would the plot to assassinate him have been uncovered once and for all?

Re-elect JFK allows to to explore these mysteries. Playing JFK himself, your goal is two-fold: to discover who tried to turn your head into a very messy pizza; and to stay in power, by winning the next election.

Blending historic footage with outrageous fiction, this is one release that looks likely to set tongues a-wagging across the country. Thankfully, it's all in the name of pure entertainment. After all, the question: "Where were you when JFK grazed his knee?" would hardly provoke the same response as the real event.

The Fears Are On TWI

We interrupt this news broadcast to bring you a quick quiz. What boardgame sold five times more than Trivial Pursuit in the upside-down land of Australia, island of former prisoners and shrimps on barbecues? The answer, as if it isn't obvious enough, is Atmosfear, the interactive video social experience that has taken families across the world by storm.

And residing in Cash-In Corner this month is Time Warner Interactive, with its PC incarnation of the popular boardgame. Based on the updated game, which will hit all decent game shops this Summer, Atmosfear: The Harbingers is, according to TWI, the first computer game of its type.

It's set in a graveyard rendered completely in 3D Studio. The player's task is to collect six keys from six different areas and race into a seventh to face their worst nightmare. A strict time limit of either 30, 60 or 90 minutes is imposed, depending on the skill level selected, and hazards such as Black Holes, Soul Rangers and various puzzles have to be surmounted if success is to be achieved.

Up to six brave adventurers can take part in the 'fun', and the game can be played over a network if required. And an excruciatingly-named 'Atmosfearic' soundtrack is also promised.

It sounds as if Atmosfear will be one of the most imaginative boardgame conversions to hit the PC this year, but we'll have to wait until September for final confirmation.

Team Talk

Who are the geezas who write PC GAMES? And just what or who has taken their fancy this month? All is revealed below...

David Upchurch

Editor

As Editor, it's chubby Dave's privilege to hog all the good games for review — this month alone he got to take a look at both Full Throttle, the new super-adventure from LucasArts, and Super Streetfighter 2 Turbo, the best beat-'em-up conversion on PC. He's a git, isn't he?

Dean Evans

Missing In Action!

We're sad to report that swoonsome Dean is no longer on the PC GAMES crew. He went missing while on a secret mission behind enemy lines, and we've no idea where he is now. However, if he were still here, we suspect he would have liked Flight Unlimited.

Alex Simmons

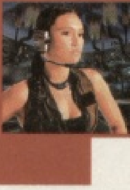
Reviews Editor

Dean's departure left a Simmons-sized hole in the Reviews Editor position, which our Alex duly filled. This now means, of course, that we need a new Staff Writer, somebody who can review all the crap that Dave and Alex casn't be bothered to look at. And it could be you...

David Kelsall

Art Editor

"Yes, that's right," says chimp-like Dave. "Just send a sample 500-word game review, along with a covering letter saying why you would be suitable for the job, to the usual PC GAMES address. Remember to clearly mark your envelope 'Staff Writer'." Thanks for that, Dave.



Games
From The Asylum

Zeewolf was one of the most popular Amiga games of last year. Taking its inspiration from David Braben's 3D shoot-'em-up Virus, but bringing it right into the real world with a mixture of modern day tanks, planes and warships, it was a stunning debut from newcomers Binary Asylum, an outfit comprising of various ex-computer mag journos.

The bad news is that Zeewolf probably won't make it on to the PC. The good news, though, is that its sequel, provisionally entitled Zeewolf 2 (imaginative, eh?), probably will.

It's likely that the game's mix of strategy and blasting will remain unchanged. It's likely, too, that the game engine — a patchwork-landscape effect that gives a fantastic impression of speed and enables the inclusion of some brilliant set pieces and surprise attacks — will be based around the original.

This is great news for PC owners. On low-spec Amigas, the game tended to jerk wildly when there was a lot of action on-screen, but, as we all know, the PC is ideally suited to 3D effects, meaning that Zeewolf 2 should be a playable blaster appealing to arcade and simulation fans alike.

As we've said, nothing is carved on stone at the time of writing but, when Zeewolf 2 hits the shelves — probably at the end of the year — you'll know where you heard it first.

It's Got A Widget...
A Widget It Has Got

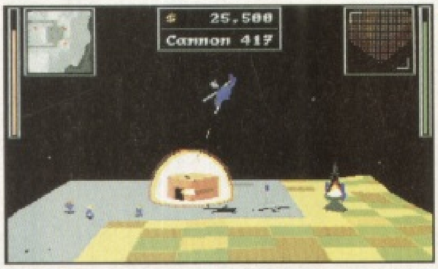
Maxis will be taking a brief sabbatical from the world of Sims next month with the release of Widget Workshop, a software experience the publisher describes as "the digital equivalent of a nutty professor's laboratory". Part of Maxis's new 'Software Toys for Kids' range, Widget Workshop is primarily aimed at younger PC users. But us here at PC GAMES have been playing around with an early version, and the majority of us are hooked already.

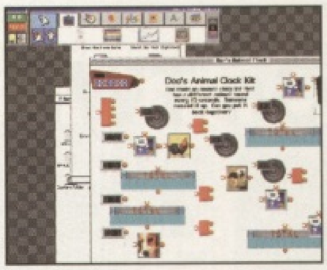
The package uses hundreds of fun and realistic objects — dubbed 'Widgets' — that can be connected together in an almost unlimited number of ways. These vary from simple devices such as multiplication boxes and timers, to more weird and wonderful objects such as widgets that simulate the pull of the moon or the sound of a dog barking. Thus almost anything can be constructed, from fruit machines to colour-mixing experiments.

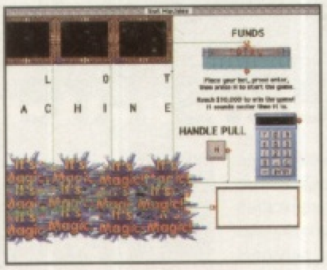
Widget Workshop comes complete with its own puzzles. The user is given different combinations of widgets and instructed to piece them together to form a specific scientific experiment.

But the package really comes into its own when you try and create your own widgets (which, incidentally, once built can be saved and loaded onto a mate's PC, even if he/she doesn't own a copy of the game — ideal for show-offs). Dave, in true money-grabbing form, tried to build a Lottery Predictor machine so that he could leave PC GAMES and build an island made of sex from his winnings.

Widget Workshop will be available from mid-June, and with any luck we'll have a full review next issue.







Greetings, pathetic humans, it is I, Imp, back in the hot seat for another no-nonsense discussion about what's been making my lava-red demon's blood boil this month. And wouldn't you know, it's that game Doom again. Why? Because I think that...

"3D games have
become two-dimensional!"

Doom has a lot to answer for, you know. Before iD's blood-fest, the PC scene was relatively fresh. Publishers trotted out a variety of games, some good, some bad. And while these releases didn't exactly break any moulds, there was a decent mix of genres.

Then came Doom, and the PC games market became stagnant.

New ideas, it seems, have been chucked out of the window as softwcos try harder and harder to emulate iD's success. Unfortunately, most have been rubbish — witness the dreadful Corridor 7 and Isle Of The Dead. It seems the credentials for a first-person blast these days are merely a dodgy 3D graphics engine and some semblance of a plot.

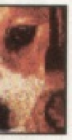
Of course, that's all nonsense. Part of Doom's success was that it was had a genuine 'Wow!' factor — people hadn't seen this kind of thing before. While the gameplay left a lot to be desired (I'm sorry, but shooting a lot of monsters and then seeking out the exit is a little too shallow for me), it's still the closest a game has come to totally immersing a player in its world.

These third-rate 3D copy-cats have less than no atmosphere, but that doesn't stop softcos from chucking them out. The rapid advancement of technology has also enabled them to be lax with their code and simply recommend a higher-spec machine in order to get the best from it.

It's true to say that not one of these 3D blasters has taken the genre one step further. Dark Forces, perhaps the best of a bad bunch, came closest with its mix of jumping, crouching and tight level design, but anyone with a decent imagination and a Doom editor could have come up with something equally as focused — minus the jumping, of course.

Even iD managed to take the shine of their reputation with Heretic — essentially Doom with a couple of extra features and chickens. And later on this year we'll have Quake. I wonder what so-called wonders await?

Nope, I foresee a backlash against this kind of game, with the 3D blaster perhaps becoming the 90s equivalent of the platformer. Software companies have to realise that they can't simply spoon-feed us. Gamers have a habit of regurgitating [er, 'trite' — Dave] after a while.



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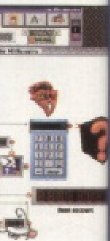

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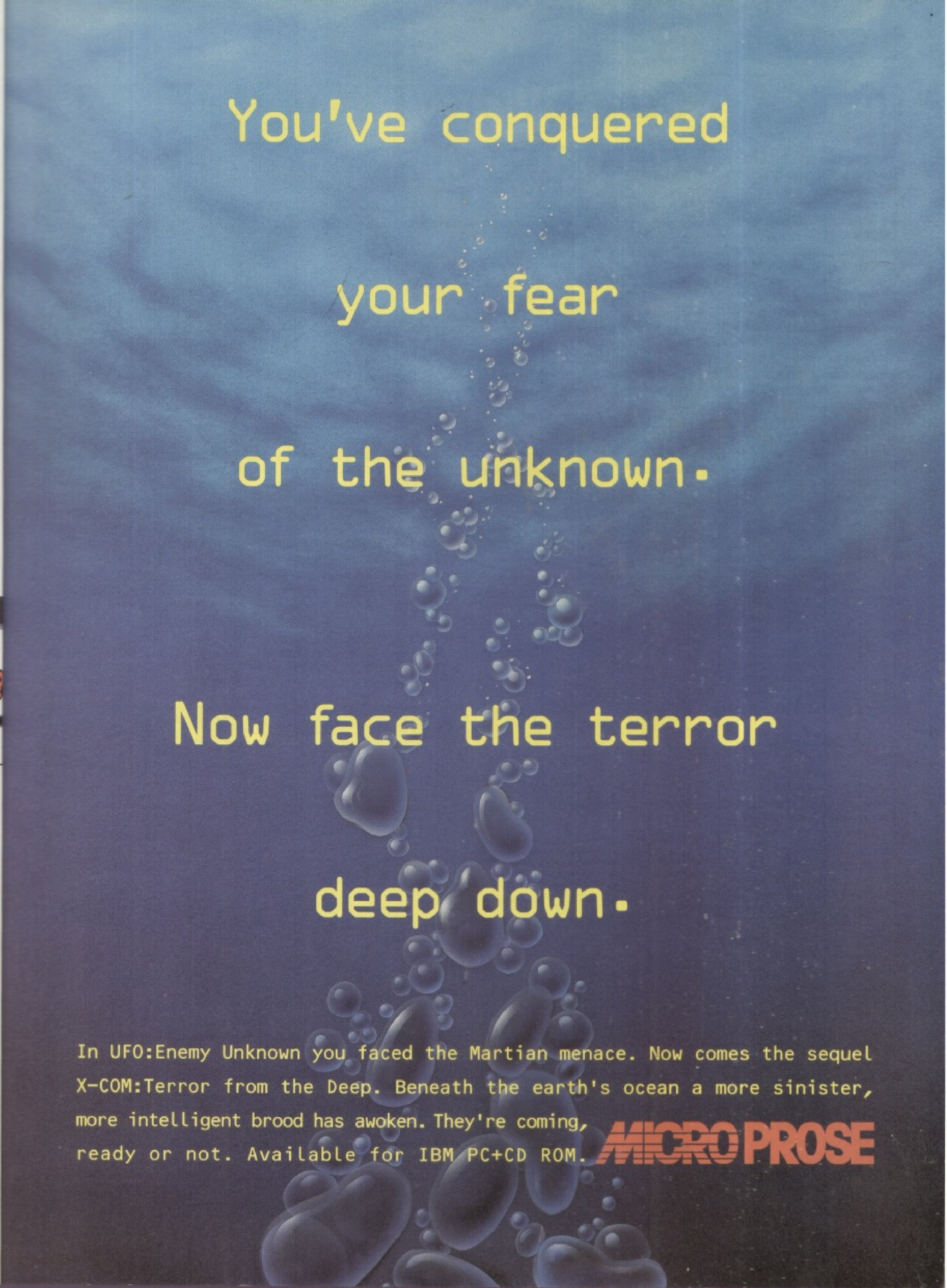

You've conquered
your fear
of the unknown.
Now face the terror
deep down.
MICROPROSE

In UFO:Enemy Unknown you faced the Martian menace. Now comes the sequel X-COM:Terror from the Deep. Beneath the earth's ocean a more sinister, more intelligent brood has awoken. They're coming, ready or not. Available for IBM PC+CD ROM.

INFO BULLETS

❍ Gemini Consultants has created a program that improves your, erm… what was it? Ah yes — memory. By spending two hours with Total Recall (costing, um, about ten pounds-ish), Thingummy-bob reckons you'll be able to remember information much more effectively. Contact Gemini on (01582) 488121.

❍ Golden Image Ltd has secured the UK rights to the innovative Alfa Twin Duo joystick adaptor that allows PC gamers to use two joysticks with a single port. Costing £24.95, and available in the shops now, this negates the need to install separate cards in order to play two-player games with a single-joystick port.

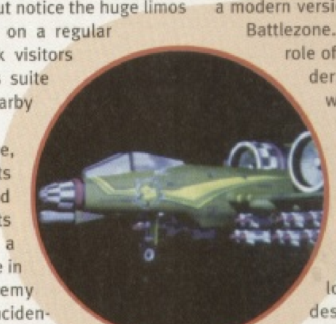
❍ Time Warner Interactive has signed up Sky Sports' commentator Andy Gray to provide the voice-over for its forthcoming Striker '95. Just to recap: Striker '95 will be vastly different from the original, featuring all kinds of enhancements and new features. Who said we're not in-depth?

❍ US Gold has announced that it has the right's to William 'Captain Kirk/T.J. Hooker/Fat Has-Been' Shatner's TekWar books, which have inspired films and a TV series. Miami-based Intracorp and Capstone will be handling the translation from page to disk, and the game will be released at Xmas.

❍ Stuck in Discworld? Got a modem? Then why not e-mail rince.wind@psygnosis for advice? Or, rather quicker, turn to page 100.

❍ Anco's Player Manager 2 is just around the corner and should be released in time to fill the gaping hole between the football seasons. Programmed by Steve Screech, the geezer behind the Kick Off series, this sequel — six years after the original game — should give the other management sims a run for their money.

Core Blimey!



Yes, predictable headline about some great new games from Core we know, but this time it should have some relevance — if the Derby-based software company's claims are to believed, the above phrase will be uttered by PC owners all around the globe when the games in question are released later in the year.

Core was absent from the recent ECTS (see report on page 9), but those who ventured outside to have a fag couldn't help but notice the huge limos that pulled up on a regular basis, to whisk visitors away to Core's suite located in a nearby plush hotel.

Once there, Core unveiled its PC line-up, and reinforced its message with a glossy brochure in which MD Jeremy Smith (who, incidentally, we still love, even though donations from his huge wad of cash, made in the recent US Gold buy-out, were remarkable only for their absence) made a passionate and honest pledge to the PC world. And what a line-up it is!

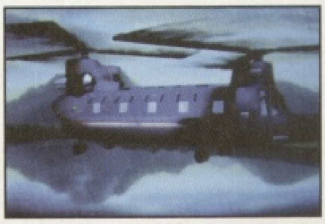
Most of them are being developed alongside the PlayStation versions — hopefully a sign of things to come from all publishers. Interestingly, and going against current trends, all of Core's releases will come on both floppy and CD formats, so non-CD-owning PC gamers will have something to play this year.

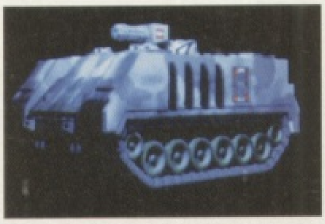
First up will be Shellshock!, a 3D tank combat simulator which plays like a modern version of the arcade croaky Battlezone. The player assumes the role of a rookie tank commander, and must battle his way through a variety of terrains and mission scenarios. Tons of FMV sequences are promised, but the emphasis here will be on immediate playability — something overlooked by many game designers in this age of graphical bells and whistles. Pencilled in for a July release on both floppy and CD formats, this looks like being one to watch.

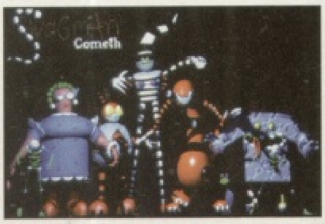
August will see the release of Thunderhawk 2, the sequel to the award-winning helicopter simulation. Although based on the original Mega CD hit, Thunderhawk 2 will take advantage of the PC's undoubtedly superior technical specifications. For a start, the game will feature depth-cueing and glorious 256-colour visuals (four times the original amount of colours) and will run much, much faster. But don't be put off by the term 'simulation' — Thunderhawk will be designed primarily as an arcade game, so shoot-'em-up fans will have something to grin about when the game is released in a few months time.

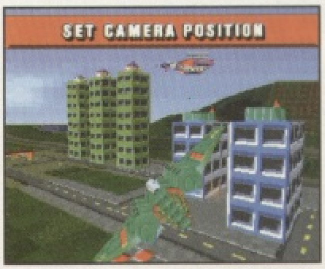
Perhaps the most interesting new title is Machinehead, subtitled 'Slaughterhouse Earth'. Coming with a 'Parental Advisory Ultra Violence' warning flash, this first-person shoot-'em-up is unlikely to have Mary Whitehouse as one of its biggest fans. Core was tight-lipped about this release — only an early version was on show — but Machinehead: Slaughterhouse Earth looks set to send politician's temperatures rising like only three-in-a-bed love sessions can do.

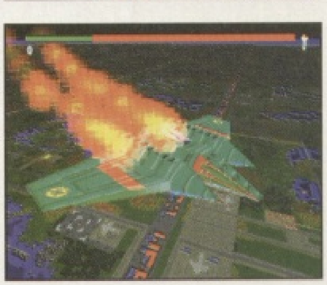
Core also premiered two other titles that are down for Autumn/Winter releases. Swagman is a fab-looking arcade adventure featuring Tim Burton-esque cartoon characters, while Tomb Raider, a third-person 3D action adventure, is (apparently) a "unique gaming experience".











Blood, Guts & *Oodles Of Cash*

Futuristic gameshows are always the same. With dear old Brucie pushing up daisies, Andrew O'Connor shot for crimes against comedy, and Rob Curling in prison awaiting trial, accused of being talentless gimp, TV mega-companies rely not on big-name stars to attract the viewing audience, but violence with a capital 'V', 'I', and 'OLENCE'.

Krisalis's forthcoming bloodfest, provisionally entitled Starfighter 3000, is equally horrific. The year is 3037, and life in the 31st Century bears no relation to the society we all know. The most popular TV programmes are watched by over a billion people, and all involve ordinary civilians pitted against super-hard gladiators armed — not with giant cotton buds — but weapons designed to frighten, injure and mutilate.

No matter what Starfighter 3000 ends up being called, it will contain 100 missions, described by Krisalis as "exciting". Aside from that, little is known, so you'll just have to make do with these pics taken from the 3DO version. It'll be CD-only and we'll have more news soon.

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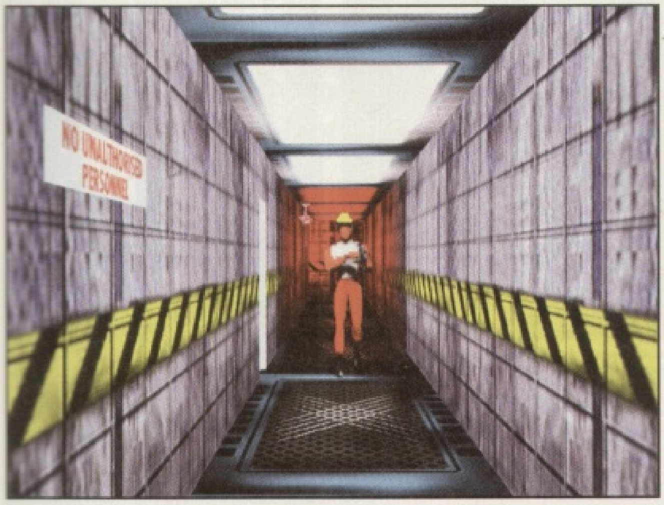


Allegiance & *Leicester*

Team 17's new company motto is: 100 per cent gameplay, 0 per cent bullshit. So Allegiance, due to be released in November, should be totally free of smelly excrement from male cows.

It's a first-person action/strategy game that will come with a 15 certificate, meaning that it will contain some scenes that may offend younger teenagers and some sexual swear words, such as bugger, arse and c... (snip! — Ed.)

Played within a real-time 3D environment, Allegiance places you in a world that embraces global harmony on one hand, whilst engaging in violent espionage with the other. Playing a new kind of super-secret agent, your job is to complete 10 tough, life-threatening missions, which vary from simple sabotage jobs to more nasty assassinations.

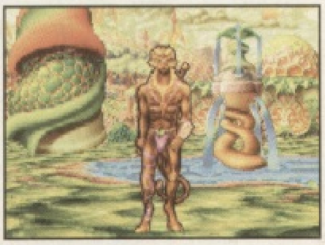
Team 17 promises that some of the events contained within the game will be genuinely shocking. SVGA enhancements are also on the cards, so owners of more powerful machines will be able to get even more from this "thinking man's action game". More news anon.

A New Game From Blue Byte

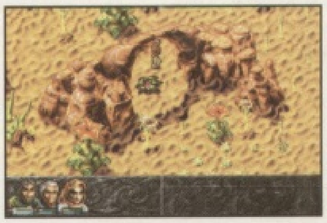
As the PC scene moves closer to becoming a 'Pentium recommended' market, 'bog-standard' 486 owners will be throwing their hats in the air and downing flaggons of ale when Blue Byte's forthcoming adventure hits the shelves.

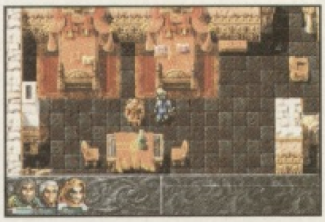
Albion (which, history lovers, is an ancient name for Great Britain) is a role-playing adventure which flicks between 2D and 3D perspectives as the game progresses. Those familiar with the Amiga release Ambermoon will be at home with the effect — and this is no coincidence, as some of Albion's coders developed the Commodore adventure.

An easy-to-use interface has been created, but real thickies will find the on-line help invaluable. There are actually three different views in Albion; a top-down 2D section that allows simple exploration of the game's many locations; an isometric 3D combat view where point-'n'-click fighting takes place; and the all-singing, all-dancing 3D texture-mapped view which enables you to traverse the game's many worlds.



The Ambermoon team were responsible for some innovative Amiga games that pushed the machine to its limits. If this level of technical wizardry is evident in Albion, this could be the surprise hit of the year. The game is scheduled for an October release — probably on CD only — and we'll bring you more information just as soon as we possibly can.





Chocks *Away!*

With both Loadstar and Cadillacs & Dinosaurs temporarily trapped in development hell, it looks like self-proclaimed 'Digital Supergroup' Rocket Science's first 'single' could well be Wing Nuts, a World War One dogfighting simulation blended with healthy dollops of humour.

Wing Nuts is the first result of Rocket Science's collaboration with the talent behind the hit Mega CD release, Tom Cat Alley. The game centres around the exploits of a dashing pilot who takes command of a bunch of scaredy-cat airmen who wouldn't say "Quack" to a duck. That brave pilot is you, and you have to guide your less-than-willing comrades through six demanding missions that involve more dogfighting than a scrap at an ugly girls' boxing tournament.

The stomach-churning, edge-of-the-seat thrills 'n' spills will be integrated with full-motion, full-screen video footage, hopefully making this an atmospheric and adrenaline-pumping blaster. While the jury is still out on Rocket Science, as hard product has yet to be seen, on paper at least it looks set to establish itself as the name for quality PC products. Let's hope so, eh?

Nuke Kid On The Block

With US Gold and Apogee Software still enjoying a long and romantic Honeymoon together, their relationship goes from strength to strength with the exciting news that the Birmingham-based softco will be publishing the Texan Shareware specialist's forthcoming epic, Duke Nukem 3D.

After the incredible, eyeball-popping success of the ultra-violent Rise Of The Triad, Apogee is turning its attentions from the world of the first-person 3D blaster to... the world of the first-person 3D blaster. Duke Nukem 3D takes Apogee's popular platform star and adds another dimension, and USG is promising that the 3D engine just has to be seen to be believed.

Well, we haven't seen it yet (so we can't quite believe it), but we're prepared to take US Gold at its word. The proof, as always, will be in the pudding, which should be served up with a healthy dollop of hot custard next month.

Bullfrog's *Baby Bio*

Bullfrog has got a lot to smile about at the moment. It swept the board at the ECTS awards, its games are generally best-sellers in every corner of the globe (yes, we know globes don't really have corners), and every new release it announces sets the PC world buzzing.

And if you're hearing the sound of thousands of bees at the moment, it's because Bullfrog has just revealed that it is working on a god game with a difference.

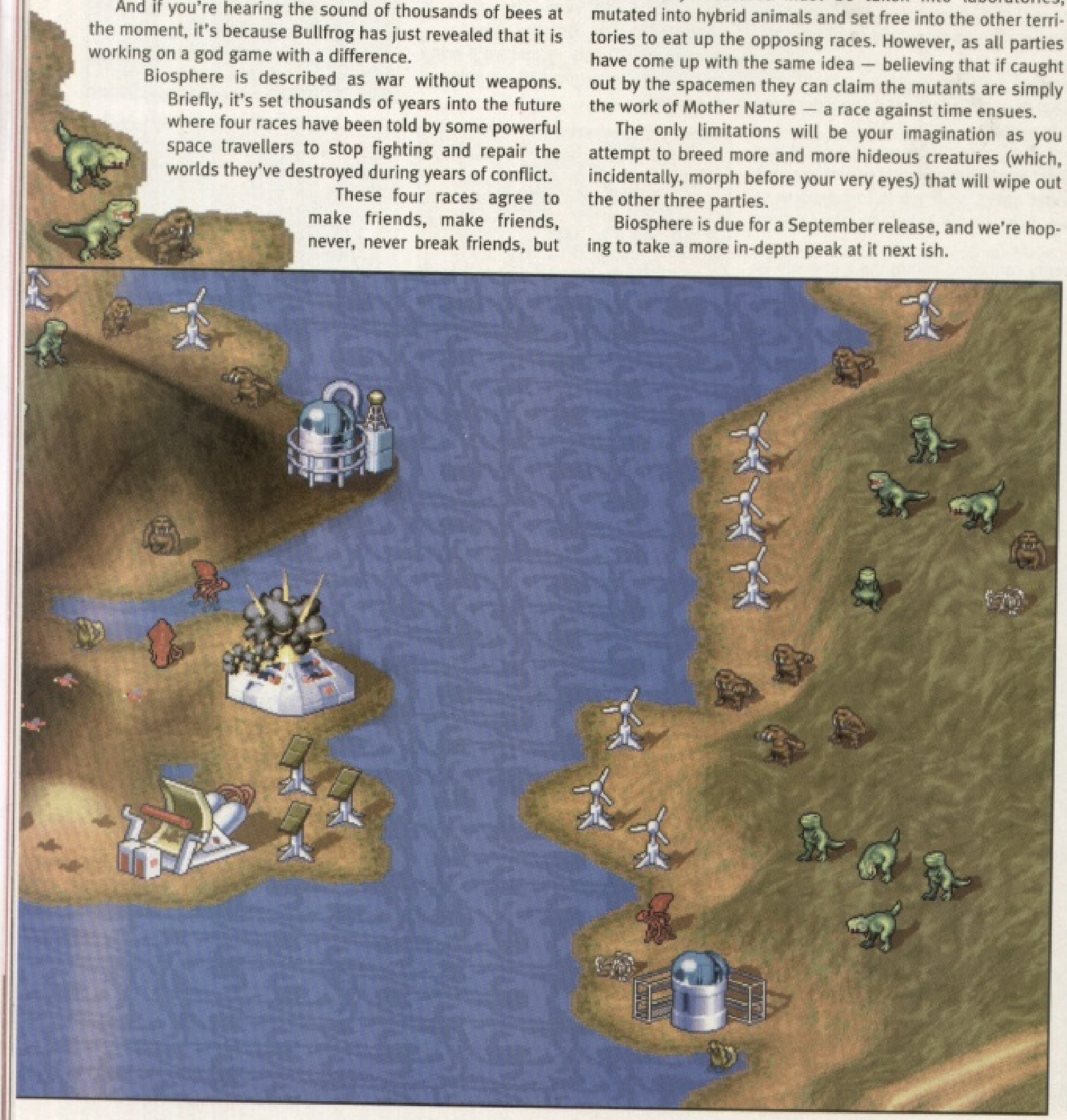
Biosphere is described as war without weapons. Briefly, it's set thousands of years into the future where four races have been told by some powerful space travellers to stop fighting and repair the worlds they've destroyed during years of conflict.

These four races agree to make friends, make friends, never, never break friends, but each decide to find some way of secretly destroying the other three. However, as these space travellers have removed all access to weaponry, another route must be taken. Thus, biological engineering is the soup of the day.

Ordinary creatures must be taken into laboratories, mutated into hybrid animals and set free into the other territories to eat up the opposing races. However, as all parties have come up with the same idea — believing that if caught out by the spacemen they can claim the mutants are simply the work of Mother Nature — a race against time ensues.

The only limitations will be your imagination as you attempt to breed more and more hideous creatures (which, incidentally, morph before your very eyes) that will wipe out the other three parties.

Biosphere is due for a September release, and we're hoping to take a more in-depth peak at it next ish.



CHARTS

Top 10 PC Games

1. X-COM: Terror From The Deep
MicroProse

2. Discworld
Psygnosis

3. Premier Manager 3
Gremlin Interactive

4. Aladdin
VIE

5. Defender Of The Empire
LucasArts

6. Transport Tycoon Editor
MicroProse

7. The Lion King
VIE

8. KA-50 Hokum
VIE

9. X-Wing Triple Pack
US Gold

10. Desert Strike
Gremlin Interactive

Top 10 CD-ROM Games

1. Discworld
Psygnosis

2. X-COM: Terror From The Deep
MicroProse

3. Dark Forces
LucasArts

4. Star Trek: TNG Demo
MicroProse

5. Descent
Interplay

6. X-Wing Collector's CD
LucasArts

7. US Navy Fighters
Electronic Arts

8. Transport Tycoon
MicroProse

9. Magic Carpet
Electronic Arts

10. Desert Strike
Gremlin Interactive

Virgin MEGASTORES

These charts are supplied by Virgin Megastore.

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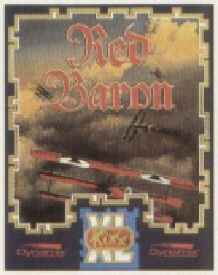
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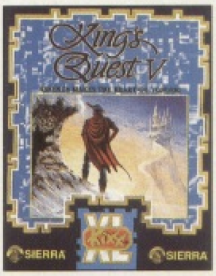
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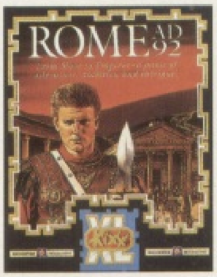
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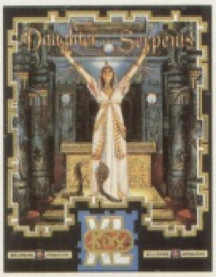
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Have you ever been go-karting? Brilliant, isn't it? You can't beat that incredible adrenalin 'rush' you get from screaming along the road, taking hair-pin corners at ridiculous speeds — and that's just on the way to the go-karting track.

But unless you're rich, it's probably not something you can afford to do often. Which is why Virgin and Manic Media created SuperKarts, the excellent karting sim that's almost as good as the real thing. Up until now SuperKarts was CD only, but those yet to join the multimedia revolution need not despair — it's out on floppy soon! Hoorah! And to celebrate, Virgin has stumped up the cash for this top compo!

The First Prize is a superb radio-controlled SuperKart — and we've got three to give away! We've had one in the office for the past few days and we can guarantee that they're great fun. Dave, in particular, loves it because he doesn't have to trek down to the sweetshop any more — he just sticks his order and some money in the kart, then drives it there and back from the sweaty comfort of his desk.

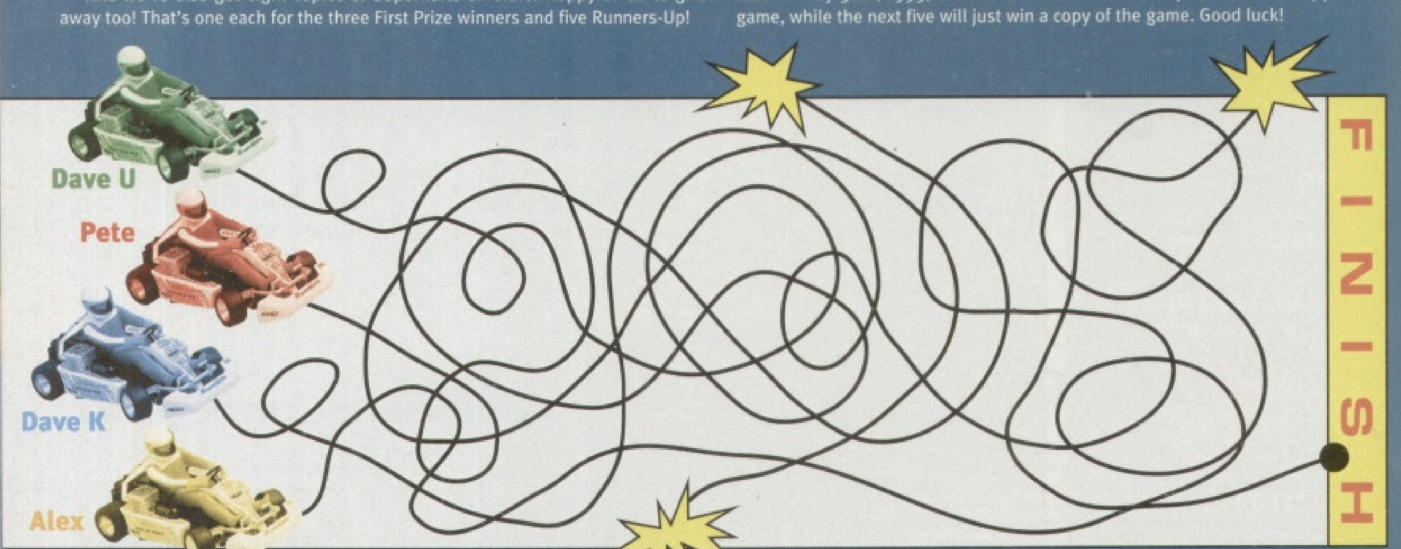
And we've also got eight copies of SuperKarts on either floppy or CD to give away too! That's one each for the three First Prize winners and five Runners-Up!

How To Enter

The PC GAMES crew have decided to compete in a go-karting race to work out who is the best at everything in the world. And down below you can see them all, revving their engines and waiting for the off. Exciting, isn't it? What we want you to do is work out who eventually wins the race. It's quite easy to do — you just follow the trails of rubber left by their tyres.

When you've done this, write your answer down (i.e. either Dave U, Alex, Dave K or Pete) on the back of a postcard or a sealed envelope. Now add your name, address and whether you'd like SuperKarts on floppy or CD should you win, then post your entry to: Burnin' Rubber Compo, PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

The first three entries plucked from Nigel Mansell's moustache on the closing date of May 30th, 1995, will win a radio-controlled SuperKart and a copy of the game, while the next five will just win a copy of the game. Good luck!



This competition is not open to employees of EMAP Images or Virgin Interactive Entertainment, their relatives or their friends. Only one entry per household. The competition closes on the 30th of May 1995, and the winners will be notified shortly afterwards. No alternative prizes will be offered. The Editor's decision is final, and no correspondence will be entered into. While

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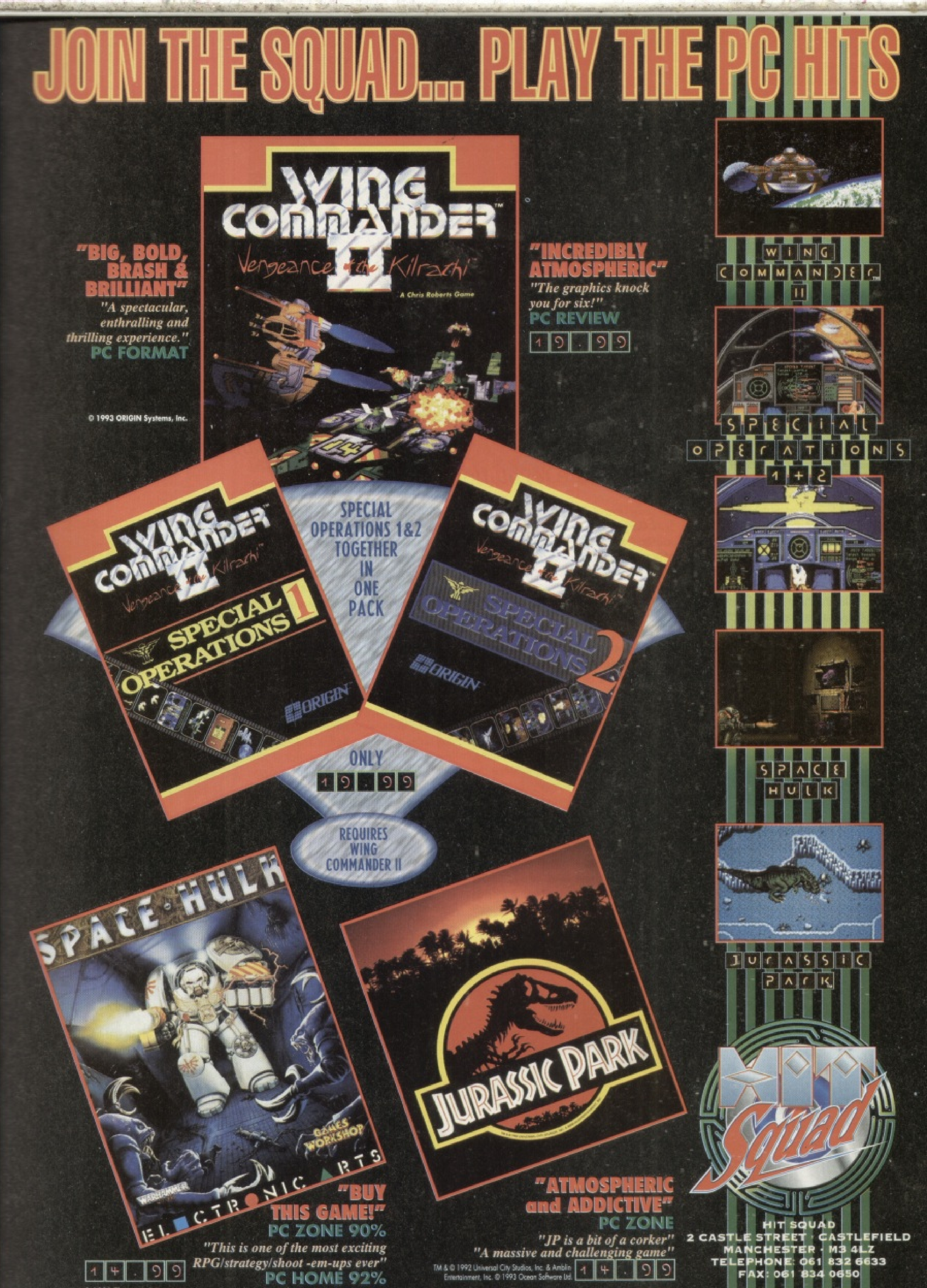
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You've Never Seen Anything Like It!

'Motion capture' seems to be the buzzword at the moment for many software developers. Acclaim, a relatively new face in the PC market, positively swears by it — and from what we've seen, it's got every right to. Passports stamped and customs officials avoided, PC GAMES headed out to Acclaim's New York-based 'motion capture' studio to witness the dawn of a software revolution.

In a remote part of New York State that nobody particularly wants to visit, a major technological revolution in computer games is occurring. It's small at the moment, but by this time next year it'll change the nature of the games you're playing and put plenty of animators out of a job.

Several companies, including Origin and Gremlin Interactive, are investing heavily in what's commonly called 'motion capture' technology. For the most part this is just the computer video equivalent of chromakey, which involves simply placing a character or an object against a plain, single-colour backdrop, filming him/her/it, then dropping the resulting digitised graphic into a game.

Acclaim, the company behind Mortal Kombat 2, has taken the concept of 'motion capture' one step further, turned it on its head and created one of the most significant advances in gaming since David Braben thought it might be a good idea to do a bit of a space-flight sim thing.

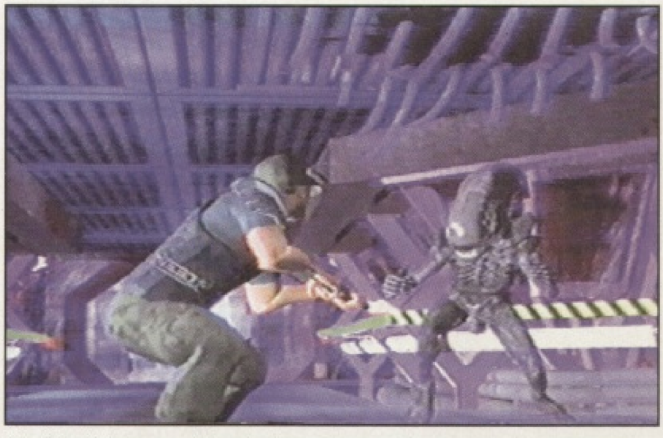
Easy 3D

The key word is 3D. Within an hour of putting an object or person into a studio Acclaim can produce game-ready 3D animations more realistic than any artist could create. This is more than just a cheap way of putting characters into games. This system actually creates fully texture-mapped 3D objects which are more realistic than anything ever seen in a computer game before. The whole process practically eliminates traditional animators.

It isn't a case of Acclaim trying to cut down development costs by axing major chunks of development teams, it's the way games are going. Since the arrival and the massive success of Doom, more and more games are played in three dimensions. But as good as the current crop of 3D games look, the characters are still rough around the edges — they may be passable now, but just take a look at the shots from Acclaim's forthcoming Alien Trilogy to see the quality of the stuff that's coming in the future.

The technology behind motion capture is obscenely simply. All it takes are four cameras, eight 4,000-Watt halogen lights, a black suit, some reflective sticky tape and the kind of workstations you'd kill to play Dark Forces on. Matey in the black suit simply bobs around doing his stuff, the computer picks up the light given off by the reflectors strapped to him and it's all fed into an Onyx workstation. Now that's about 20 seconds work from start to finish. The clever bit is what happens next...

What comes into play is a set of algorithms which plot the rotation and position of the actor's various joints and bones to give the most realistic interpretation of movement possible on today's computer hardware. No other system does this and it will be a long



(Above) No, this isn't an out-take from the Aliens movie, or a grab from the animated intro to Alien Trilogy, it's an actual game shot. Incredible, isn't it?

Awesome Aliens

By far the most impressive use of motion capture is in Acclaim's forthcoming Alien Trilogy. The game's already been in development for three years (and that's three proper Earth years, not bizarre programmers' years) and it's promising to be one of the most visually impressive games released on any system.

It's based on all three Alien movies, although it's probably not worth them bothering taking anything from the third one. Even better than the plot they have to work with, the basic game design is for a 3D Doom-style Alien slaughter-fest. All the weapons from the film are included, along with a few hi-tech gadgets from the programmers' imagination.

Like the human characters, all the aliens have been motion-captured. Well, not yer actual aliens obviously, but actors with various alien appendages strapped to them. From there-on the process is exactly the same — and the results have to be seen to believed. Acclaim are still keeping much of the game under wraps at the moment, but if we're all good children they might release it in time for Christmas.

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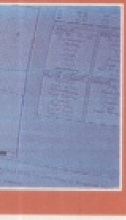
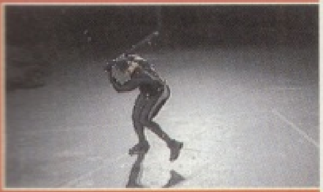


Easy As One, Two, Three...

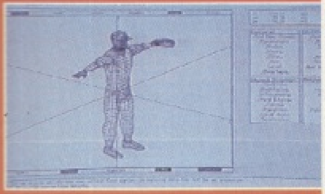
The basic capture process is as simple as it's effective. All it requires is a little effort, a few out-takes and some very powerful computer kit...

(1) 65 reflective pads are attached to the actor. There's no hi-tech jiggery-pokery here — the pads are made out of velcro and reflective sticky tape!

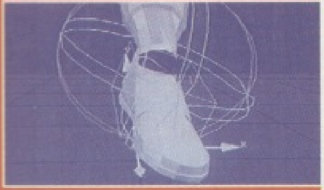


(2) All that's required here is to make sure the computer is picking up the right information and no additional light is being reflected.

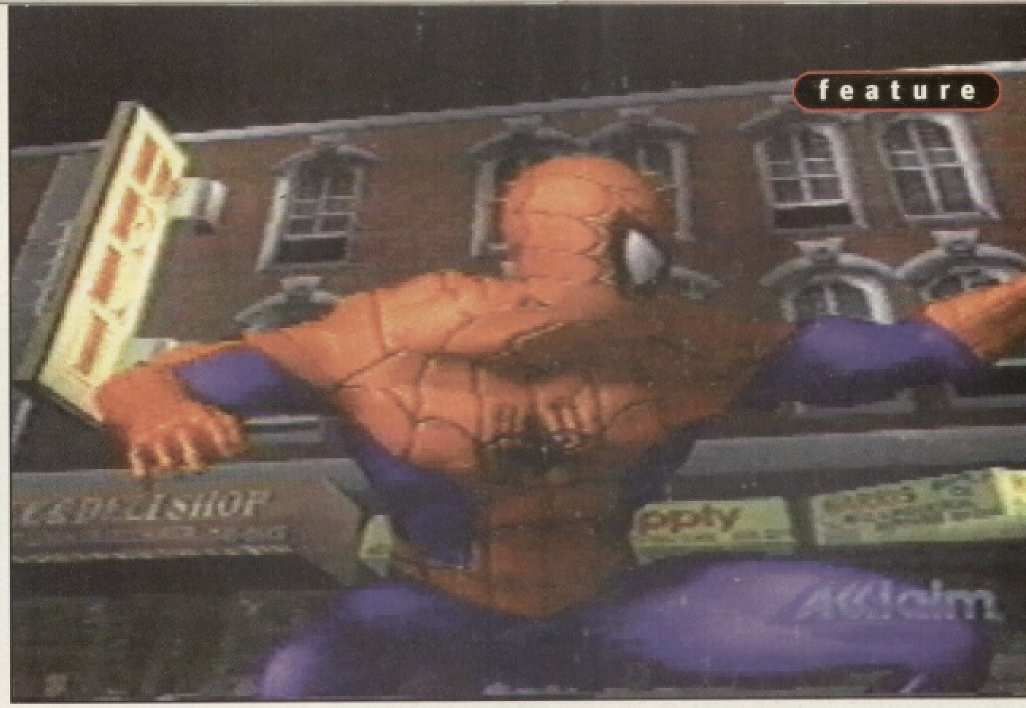
(3) One the skeleton has been grabbed, the computer plots the person's frame around it.



(4) Next the bone rotation software kicks in as the programmers work out the most realistic movements paths.



(5) Finally the main body of the actor is ready and animated. All that remains now is for the digitised textures to be added.



(Above) Acclaim has used motion capture technology to bring the amazing Spiderman to life — and how! Soon, all games will look like this...

time before any company will be able to develop similar technology.

It was originally designed by an outfit called Biomechanics to work out the best way to treat sports injuries, with work starting on the software 15 years ago. But their good intentions on the medical front soon gave way when Acclaim stepped in three years ago with the company Am-Ex and bought the whole shebang lock, stock and hardrive.

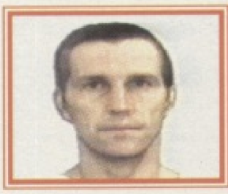
It's Scanner Time

The results are spectacular. Instead of an artist's approximation of a human form around a digitised frame, what you get is the most realistic computer-generated human movement yet seen on a computer. It's flexible, scalable and ready to be dropped into a game. But it doesn't end there.

The icing on the cake of this system is digital scanning. By employing a rotating laser scanner, Acclaim can producing a fully three-dimensional scan of an actor's head then matte it onto the character. The application of this stretches beyond just games. For movie production it lets them place an actor's image on a stuntman, for instance, so directors can do away with dodgy masks or unconvincing look-alikes.

In fact, Warner Brothers were so impressed with the technology that they actually hired Acclaim to produce some of the special effects for the forthcoming Batman Forever. No-one will let on just at which points they're used, but if you don't notice them during the movie, then they must be pretty good.

Already the technology has gone into play on several new titles. The first of them will be Carl Thomas 'Big Hurt' Baseball. Unfortunately all the graphics have been reduced to traditional sprites, but it's coming out on the SNES and Mega Drive, so what do you expect?



(Above) This isn't a photo, but a totally texture-mapped, 3D-rendered head.

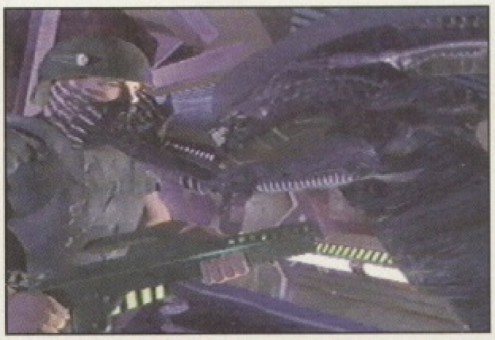
> *"[Motion capture is] the most significant advance in gaming since David Braben thought it might be a good idea to do a bit of a space-flight sim thing."*

Re-animator

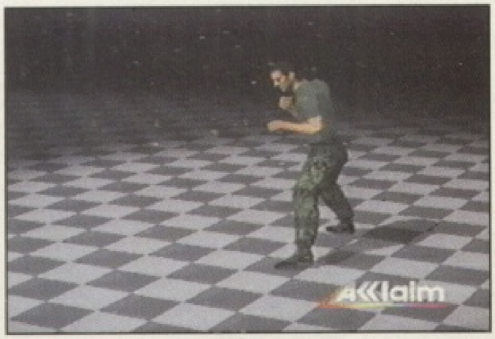
The speed at which the motion capture process takes place is frightening. If you look at other games based around more rudimentary motion capture techniques then compare them to this, it leaves you gob-smacked. When the demonstrated it to us, it took two men and one actor just 20 minutes to put a 15-second 3D texture-mapped character onto a 3D basketball court.

Until the advent of custom graphics chips, such as Brender, this is the perfect technology for PC. Because the graphics are mathematically calculated, the game relies on the PC's CPU rather than any of the fancy custom hardware that's employed in 'super' consoles such as the Saturn and PlayStation.

Ultimately it will be the quality of the games built around the graphics that will determine whether or not Acclaim have spent their money wisely. But going on the evidence of Alien Trilogy, it looks like Acclaim are set to be the big boys in 1996.



(Above) A Marine gets a smack on the lips from a friendlier-than-normal Alien. See? They're not all bad...



(Above) A graphic taken from some early test shots. The realism of the figure's movement has to be seen to be believed.

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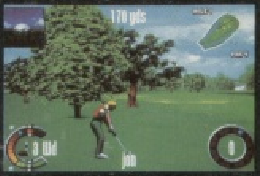
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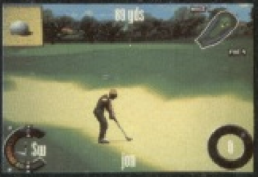

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previews

The future of PC gaming looks very bright indeed, as you'll discover for yourself in this showcase of some of 1995's more imminent releases.

Creative Edge

Prisoner Of Ice..26

Infogrames continue its long line of horror games with the second Call Of Cthulhu release, Prisoner of Ice, yet another terrifying voyage into the mysterious and the macabre. Peeking from behind a pillow, David Upchurch went ghost-busting.

BrainDead 13..28

With Dragon's Lair and Space Ace now little more than bad memories, has ReadySoft finally broken the mould and created a game that is actually playable, and not just a key-press memory test? A very impressed Alex Simmons seems to think so.

Baldies..30

Hairless heroes have been sadly overlooked in most computer games (barring Lex in BioForge), so surely GameTek's follicle-free god game is the first of its kind? A toupee-topped but otherwise hirsute David Upchurch went to find out.

Aliens Part 2..33

The bitch is back in the second instalment of our exclusive in-depth preview of Cryo's magnificent Aliens: The Comic Book Adventure. Alex Simmons book a return trip to 'gay' Paris to see how the project was continuing to shape up.

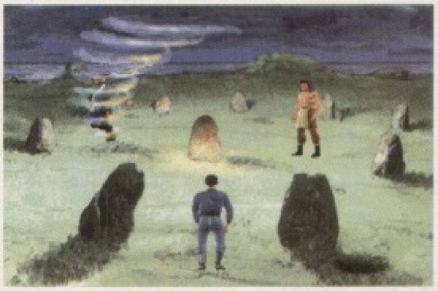
When The Show Comes To Town..39

Held at Olympia last April, this Spring's European Computer Trade Show was jam-packed with all the hottest games that are currently planned to be released in 1995. Virgin's cartoon extravaganza Heart Of Darkness (an audio-visual extravaganze which many proclaimed star of the show), Bullfrog's Magic Carpet 2, Sierra's Phantasmagoria, EA's Project Morphs and The Bitmap Brothers' Z were just a few of the games on display to an eager press. As always, PC GAMES was right at the front of the queue, fighting and clawing its way through the pack to get the very first look.

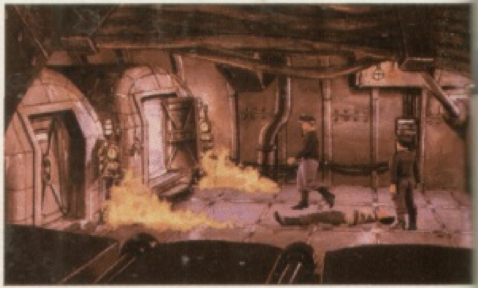
Nightmar

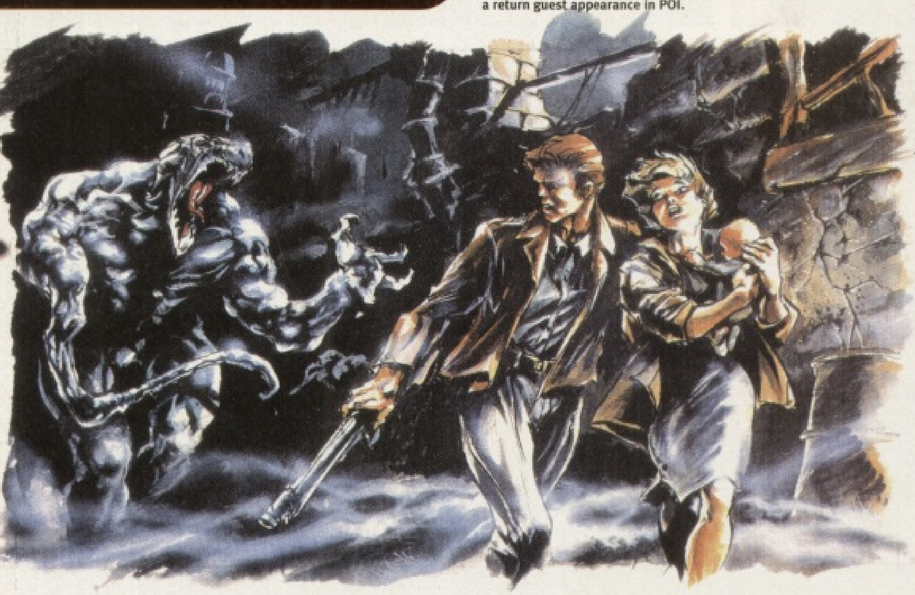
If there's something weird... In your neighbourhood... Then, who you gonna blame? INFOGRAMES! Yes, the French horror specialists are back with yet another terrifying voyage into the unknown. David Upchurch watches as his hair turns white...

GAME	PRISONER OF ICE
PUBLISHER	INFOGRAMES
DEVELOPER	IN-HOUSE
WORK *STARTED*	EARLY 1994
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	JUNE 1995



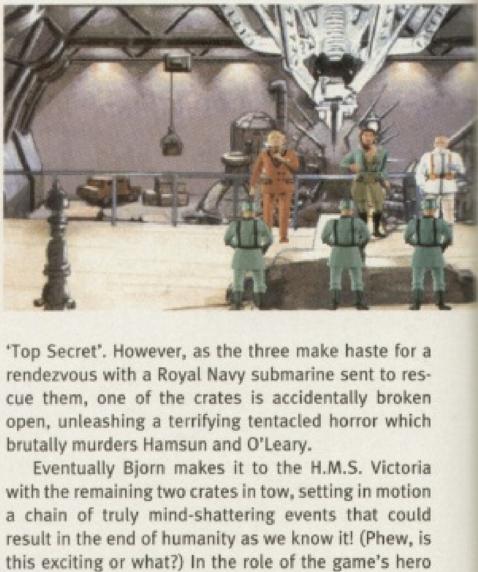
(Above) Remember the standing stones at Illsmouth? Well, they make a return guest appearance in POI.





(Left) One of the many pre-production sketches created for POI by Infogrames' talented team of artists.

(Below) You fight earthly horrors as well as unearthly in POI...



You know, I've never visited Infogrames' HQ in France. And quite frankly, I'm not that sure if I ever want to. On the basis of the games that the company produces, I imagine it to be something like The Addams Family mansion, with everything decked in cobwebs and covered in dust. Ghosts and ghouls lurk around every corner, just waiting to scare the crap out of any poor, unsuspecting journos foolish enough to pass through the company's portals.

Of course, in reality it's probably nothing like that at all (I hope), and I'm sure that the people who work there would just love to have you for dinner (in the nicest possible sense, naturally). But even so, Infogrames' apparent obsession with the horrific and the macabre, as typified by its past hits such as the Alone In The Dark games and Shadow Of The Comet, does make you wonder...

...And that ominous reputation is likely to be enhanced further by the imminent release of Prisoner Of Ice, a spine-chilling, moist-pants-inducing graphic adventure that, we're promised, will be so scary, you'll have to play most of it from behind the sofa with your eyes closed. Those of a nervous disposition have been warned — this isn't a game designed to be played by Little Timmy, aged 5.

Prisoner Of Ice comes across as a sort of spookier version of Indiana Jones. Set in the 1930s, it centres around the nefarious activities of the Ahenerbe, a secret division of Nazi scientists assigned by Hitler to research into magic and the occult. And at a secret Nazi base deep in the frozen wastes of the Antarctic, that research is starting to pay off...

As the game begins, the explorer Peter Hamsun, his young son Bjorn and a Royal Navy commando named O'Leary have just escaped from the Nazi base, carrying with them a cargo of three large crates labelled 'Top Secret'. However, as the three make haste for a rendezvous with a Royal Navy submarine sent to rescue them, one of the crates is accidentally broken open, unleashing a terrifying tentacled horror which brutally murders Hamsun and O'Leary.

Eventually Bjorn makes it to the H.M.S. Victoria with the remaining two crates in tow, setting in motion a chain of truly mind-shattering events that could result in the end of humanity as we know it! (Phew, is this exciting or what?) In the role of the game's hero Ryan, a special agent for American Naval Intelligence working in collaboration with the Royal Navy, the player must battle both evil Nazis and other-worldly terrors in a quest that takes him around the globe — and far beyond.

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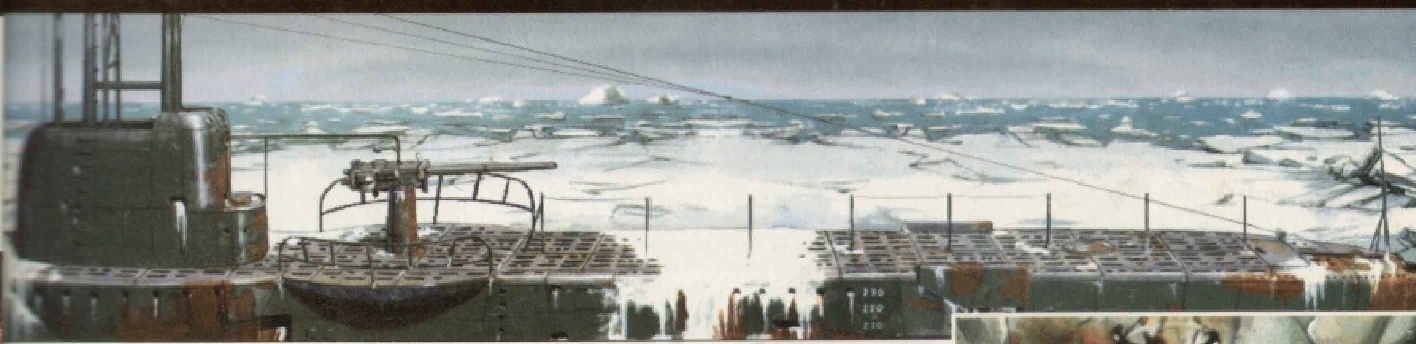


Although Prisoner Of Ice is billed as a sequel to Infogrames' aforementioned Shadow Of The Comet, the links between the two titles are tenuous to say the least. Yes, so POI has the village of Illsmouth (which is where the bizarre happenings in SOTC took place) as one of its many locations, but beyond that the only similarities are that they're both graphic adventures based on Chaosium Inc.'s Call Of Cthulhu table-top role-playing game, which in turn is based on the Gothic horror works of author H.P. Lovecraft. In fact, POI takes most of its inspiration from Lovecraft's 'The Mountains Of Madness', which too centres around explorers in the Antarctic uncovering horrors beyond human comprehension.

> "[Prisoner Of Ice] will be so scary, you'll have to play most of it from behind the sofa with your eyes closed."

Graphically, POI is a world away from SOTC. On the same CD there are versions of the game in both VGA and, for more powerful machines, SVGA. The quality of the backgrounds and the animated cutscenes, which punctuate the game to help further the tense plot, just has to be seen to be believed.

Infogrames has also employed motion capture to animate the game's forty-plus characters. In fact, the developers claim that the game contains over 16,000 frames of animation, each rendered in 3D Studio. Infogrames reckon that they're the first company to use motion capture in an adventure, and on playing the game you can see why they did it — the results are simply breath-taking, with the characters moving so realistically that it's like watching a movie.

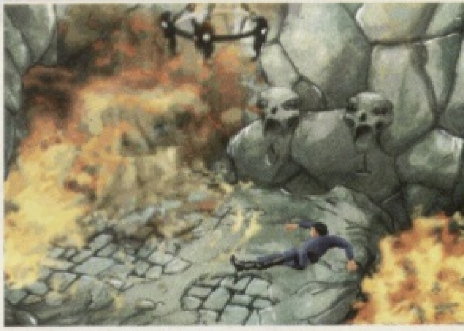
And this 'movie-like' feel is further enhanced by the use of digitised speech throughout the game (although the preview version I saw was in French) and the narrow game window, which creates a 'Cinemascope'-style effect. This also works quite well in terms of the player interface, allowing things like the inventory to be stored 'off-screen', leaving the player free to enjoy the wonderful graphics.

The interface is a big improvement over SOTC's too. There are no tiny control icons to fiddle about with — you simply point-'n'-click with the left and right mouse buttons to either examine objects or use them. Items can also be dragged from your inventory and used on other objects. It's all very simple and extremely user-friendly.

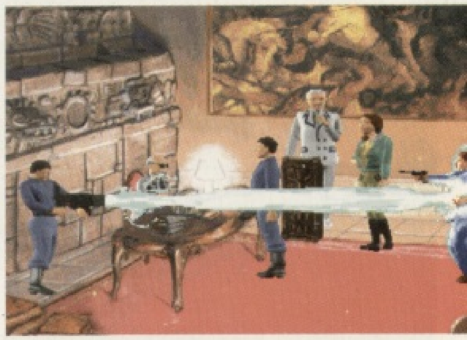
Indeed, Infogrames is very keen on 'user-friendliness'. For example, it's likely that you'll die quite often while playing POI — after all, you are fighting nightmarish creatures from another dimension, so it's a little optimistic to hope that all they'll do when they attack you is give you a couple of bruises and a fat lip.

However, if you think that this means there will be lots of tedious loading up old saved games and replaying bits, think again. When you die, a 'Joker' is stored in the saved game directory, which takes you back a few steps from where you died. This allows you to try again without having to wade through loads of stuff you've already done. It's a neat touch, and one that other graphic adventure writers would be wise to put in their future games.

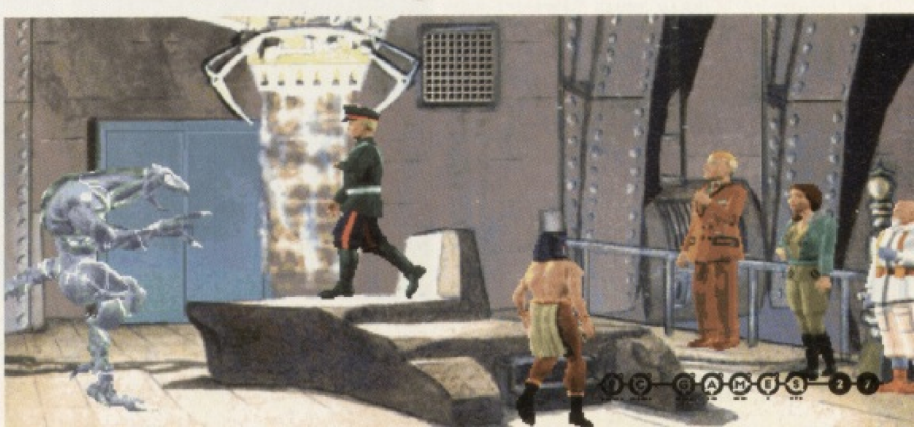
As a fan of the Call Of Cthulhu RPG and of H.P. Lovecraft's writing, I'm really looking forward to Prisoner Of Ice. If nothing else, the game's macabre plot and horrific set-pieces should make an interesting change from the comedic exploits and off-the-wall humour that typify games in the graphic adventure genre. One thing's for sure: it's a far cry from Discworld and the like. There is one recommendation, though — don't play it alone...



(Below) The heroic Ryan is saved from being murdered by a mystery assassin by... himself!?! And if you think this event is strange, you ain't seen nothing yet...



(Below) Euurgh! What is that thing? Whatever it is, it's weird and it's pissed off! You'll meet many strange creatures as you explore POI's various exotic locations.

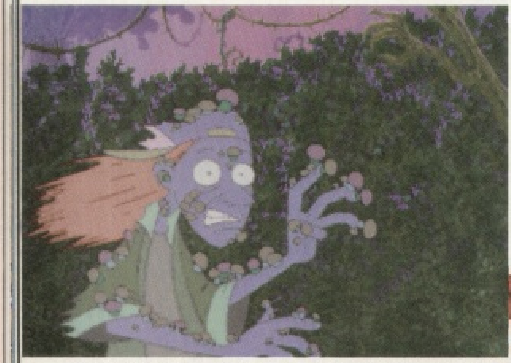


Dead On Arrival

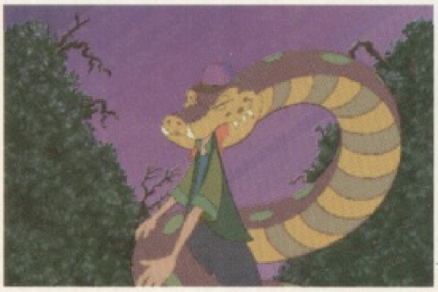
Have ReadySoft finally realised that lush graphics don't necessarily make a decent game? Alex Simmons certainly hopes so.

Nick Walkland, PR Executive at Empire Interactive, is not having a good time. Having spent the last 15 minutes trying to convince PC GAMES' hyper-cynical reporter that ReadySoft's new comedy horror game *will* be infinitely more playable than Dragon's Lair, he finally began to break-down. "Look, BrainDead 13 *is* far more interactive than Dragon's Lair".

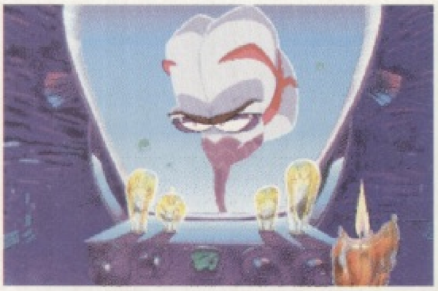
Still unsure, our intrepid journo asks: "Er, why?" Replying wearily, a harsh tone in his voice, Nick explains: "Rather than just learning all the moves and playing from memory, there isn't a set path to follow as such. BrainDead gives you the option to go left, right, up and down — in any direction basically". Hmm, sounds better already.



Fried mushrooms, anyone? This is just one of the novel ways of dying in ReadySoft's cartoon caper, BrainDead 13.

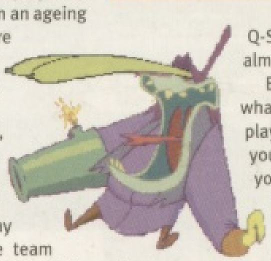


Gulp! Oh dear, it looks like Lance has lost his head again. That'll teach him for play with his snake...



This brain-ache is Dr Nero Neurosis, a devious megalomaniac who has sinister plans to take over the world.

But then so it should do, because BrainDead 13 is the game ReadySoft are hoping will get them recognised for producing top-quality arcade games rather than conversions of old (and somewhat unplayable) laserdisc game. BrainDead 13 isn't based on an ageing coin-op from yesteryear as publisher Empire Interactive is keen to stress, it's an entirely original game that has taken just over a year to produce.



"It's been a long time in development, since April 1994 in fact", reckons Nick Walkland. "There's a team of over 40 animators working on the project, many of whom have previously worked on Saturday morning cartoons and feature films. The team leader, Dave Quesnelle, worked on Beetlejuice while Dan Turner, assistant director of BrainDead 13, has worked at Steven Spielberg's animation studio in London on various feature films."

The team of talented artists worked non-stop for some twelve months to create the crazy cartoon-style graphics featured throughout. "Each animation cell was drawn by hand" reveals Walkland, "then scanned in to the computers and digitally touched up." The result is nothing short of stunning, the graphics being a vast improvement over the grainy images seen in Dragon's Lair.

There's a lot more emphasis on humour too, and the animators spent a lot of time perfecting the sight gags that feature heavily in the game. Running directly from CD, the sound is also a vast improvement, and ReadySoft has used a technique similar to Q-Sound to give the music a deep, almost three-dimensional feel.

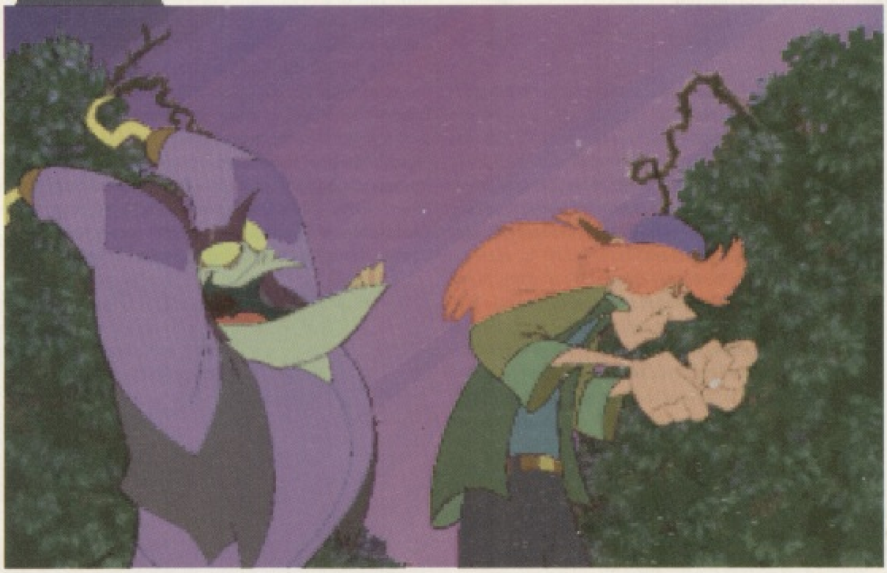
GAME	BRAINDEAD 13
PUBLISHER	EMPIRE INTERACTIVE
DEVELOPER	READYSOFT
WORK *STARTED*	APRIL 1994
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	JUNE 1995

But (isn't there always a but?) what about the all-important gameplay? As Walkland mentioned earlier, you are pretty much free to go where you want and to tackle the puzzles in just about any order you wish. This means that if you're stuck at one bit of the game, you simply turn around and explore another area until you work out the correct solution.

Having the ability to do this proves invaluable, especially while exploring the castle in which the game is set. It also means you won't play exactly the same game twice, especially when you consider some of the monsters attack randomly so even if you have played the game before you really don't know what's going to happen next.

BrainDead 13 won't suffer from slow-down either, even if the game is running on a chuggish 486. The reason for this is ReadySoft's excellent compression program that stores sections of the game in cache memory, thus negating any need to access the CD while actually playing the game.

As well as the standard CD game, an MPEG-compatible version is also in development. Using the card's capabilities to create full-screen TV quality graphics, could this be the closest thing to a proper cartoon? Find out when BrainDead 13 is released in June.



Look out behind you! Fritz, Doc Nero's faithful half-pet/half-thingy chases Lance through the maze that leads up to the castle, slicing him in two with a swipe from his hook. Keep moving and the grimy ghoul will be left in your wake.

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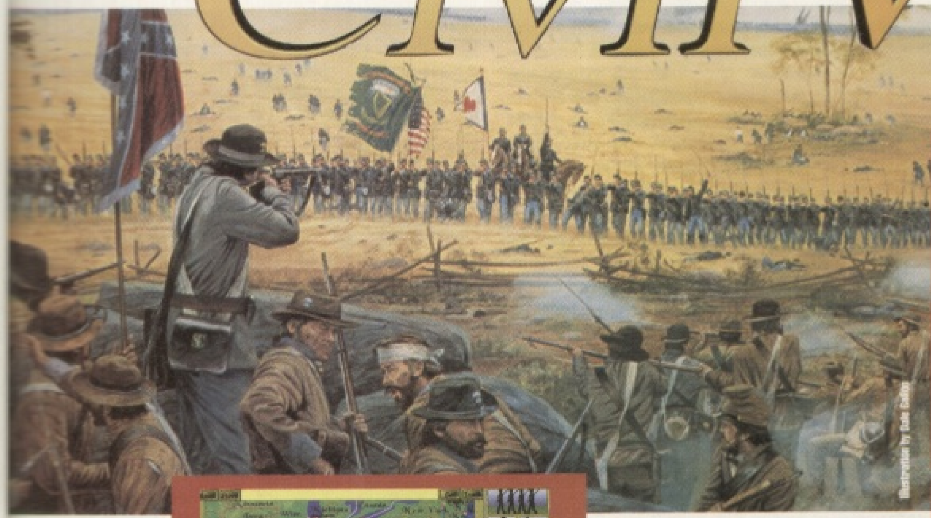
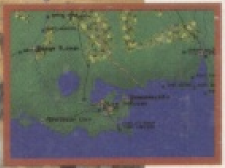
20,000 DEAD ON THE BATTLEFIELD...
ENEMY GUNS RIPPING INTO YOUR FLANK...
CAVALRY ADVANCING TOWARDS YOUR CAPITAL...

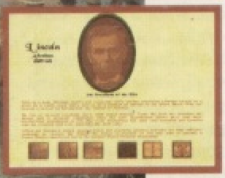
DECIDING THE FATE OF A NATION WAS NEVER GOING TO BE EASY

The Civil War

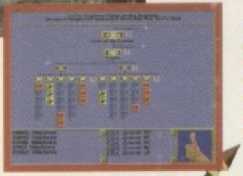




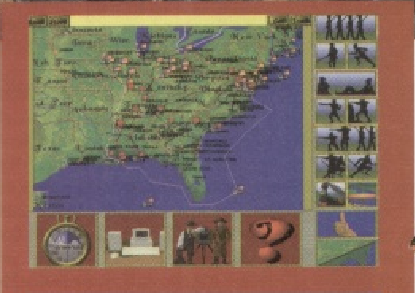
BUILD-
RECRUIT ARMIES, BUILD FLEETS, SET UP BLOCKADES, IMPROVE RAILWAYS AND CONSTRUCT FORTIFICATIONS.



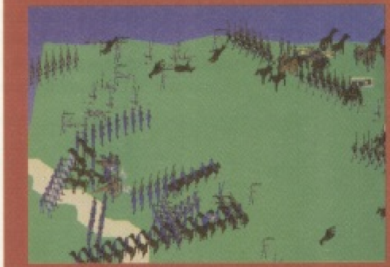
DATABASE-
ACCESS TO ALL THE INFORMATION YOU WILL EVER NEED, GENERALS, WEAPONS AND WHAT REALLY HAPPENED.



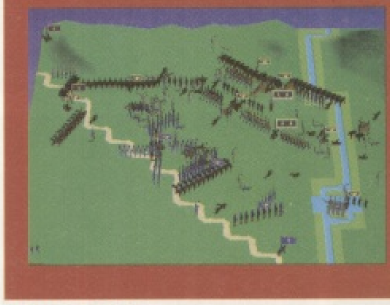
COMMAND-
APPOINT, PROMOTE AND DISMISS HISTORICAL GENERALS. DECIDE ARMY STRENGTHS AND FORMATIONS, PUT YOUR STRATEGY INTO ACTION.



MANOEUVRE-
USE THE DETAILED CAMPAIGN MAP OF THE USA TO MOVE YOUR ARMIES BY LAND, SEA, RAIL AND RIVER.



FIGHT-
MOVE AND FIGHT INDIVIDUAL ARTILLERY, CAVALRY AND INFANTRY UNITS ON 3D TEXTURE MAPPED GOURAUD SHADED BATTLEFIELDS.



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INTERACTIVE

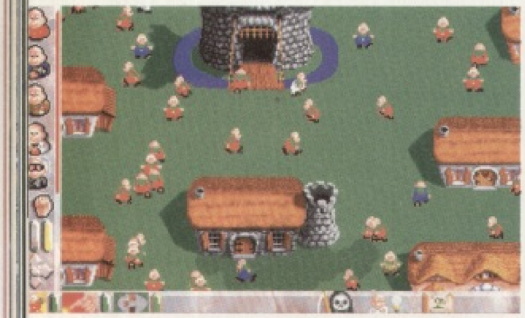
The hirsute David Upchurch samples GameTek's would-be Lemmings beater. Will it be yet another case of hair today and gone tomorrow?

The Hai

Baldness is a word that strikes fear into the heart of every virile young man on this planet. For some reason, it's the common belief that if you haven't got a scalp covered in healthy, fully-functioning follicles, then you're a social outcast who will spend their life being unpopular, unloved and unsuccessful.

But really, you don't need a full head of hair to do well. Look at Sean Connery — he's only got a few tufty white strands over his ears and the women go wild over him. And then there's Patrick Stewart, respected actor and star of Star Trek: TNG, which was one of the biggest shows on TV. And what about Paul Daniels? He's, er, quite good at magic tricks...

And as if in recognition of the fact that, hey, it's *okay* to have a head like a cueball, GameTek is poised to release a new computer game celebrating the joys of slapheaded-ness. Called (somewhat aptly) Baldies, it's a humourous Lemmings/Populous/Settlers-style strategy game in which the player controls a tribe of rug-less humanoids in a battle for supremacy against rival tribes, such as the Hairies.



(Above) The buildings vary in size and scale — the bigger they are, the more Baldies they'll produce.

Using the icons ranged down the side of the screen, the player can assign each Baldy a job, such as soldier, scientist or builder. Soldiers will seek out the enemy and kill them, scientists will invent new weapons and traps, while builders will erect houses and castles, inside of which more Baldies can be born, better weapons invented and so on.

As usual in this sort of game, success comes from cunningly exploiting your initially limited resources to the best effect. However, it promises to be a lot more fun than, say, The Settlers, simply because of the varied and bizarre ways you can kill the enemy. There are traps that make Baldies inflate and eventually explode, springboards that toss them into nearby lakes, napalm bombs that set fire to everyone on-screen... you name it, it's in there.

According to David Wightman, MD of developers' Creative Edge and the lead programmer of Baldies, the game's origins are simple: "We just wanted to design a game that had something to do with lots of little characters running around the screen, all with their own Artificial Intelligence and doing their own thing. As it is now, Baldies is miles away from the original idea."

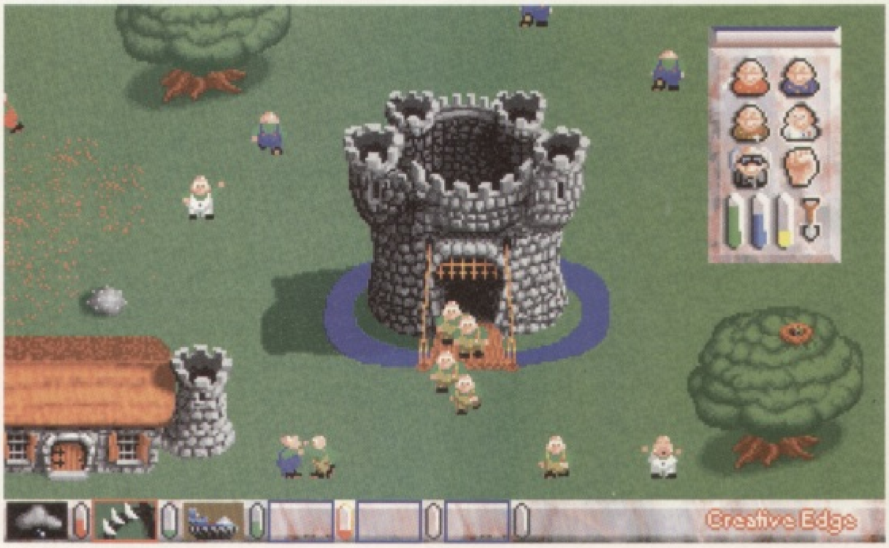
Indeed, the original idea was for Baldies to be a real hardcore strategy game, with the player able to assign a multitude of jobs and tasks to their tiny tribesmen. However, as the game developed, the number of options was reduced, mainly because it meant the game was more enjoyable. "It wasn't a conscious decision to make it more arcade-y than simulation," says Wightman, "it just happened that that was the most fun."

GAME	BALDIES
PUBLISHER	GAMETEK
DEVELOPER	CREATIVE EDGE
WORK *STARTED*	FEBRUARY 1993
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	MAY 1995

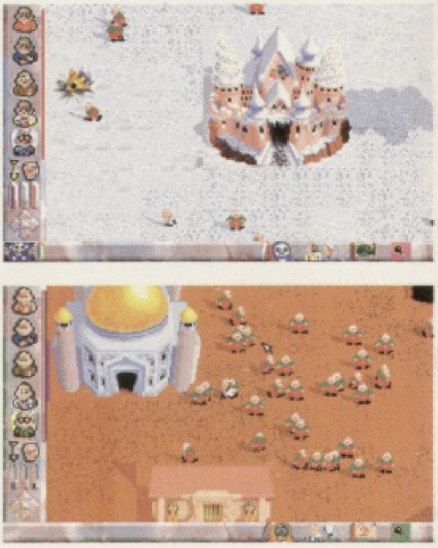
The look of the game has evolved quite substantially too: "The original look was a much flatter one," says Wightman, "but then we kind of tilted it a little bit toward you and it made things much better. We had a version that was isometric, so you could walk behind things properly, but it was quite difficult to work out what should happen and when."

> "We simply wanted to design a game that had something to do with lots of little characters running around the screen, all with their own Artificial Intelligence and doing their own thing."
>
> David Wightman,
> MD of Creative Edge and lead programmer of Baldies.

Indeed, it's mainly the way the game looks and the animation of the Baldies that makes it so appealing. "Everything in the game is deliberately graphical; there's not really a lot going on behind the scenes that you don't know about," says Wightman. "We've got



(Above) This impressive-looking castle is your main base of operations — if it falls to the Hairies, then your quest for Baldy domination of the entire world will come to an abrupt end.



(Above) In all there are five different types of 'world' to explore, each with their own unique set of perils.

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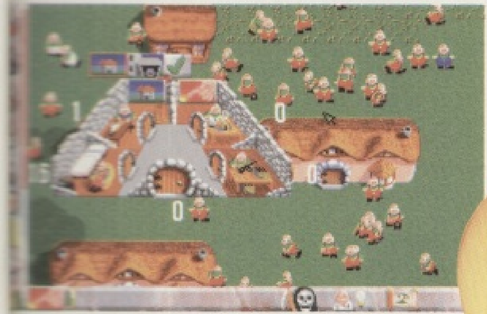
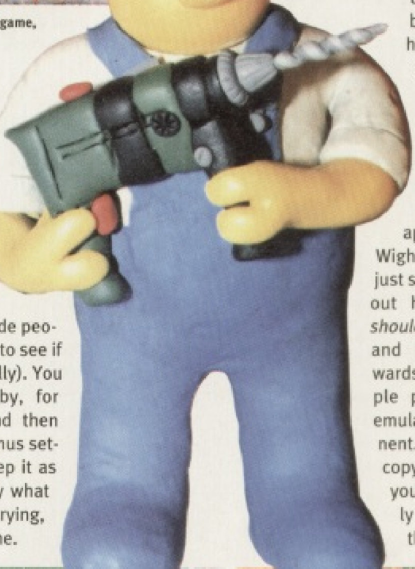


(Right) There are animated cutscenes during the game, starring these Morph-like plasticine figures.

the Baldies doing things like huddling together and falling asleep under a tree if they're tired. They'll urinate just for the sake of it if they're bored."

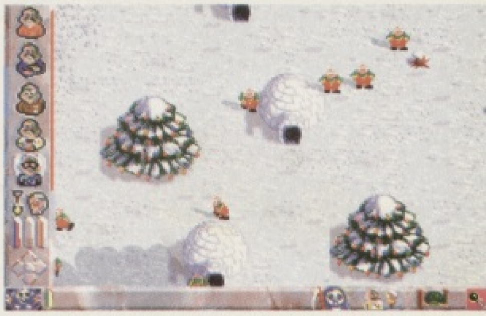
Wightman is keen for players to experiment when playing Baldies: "The basic idea is that with the interface and the tools you have, you can try anything with anything to see if it works. You can hide people in trees, or drop people into lakes to see if they drown (which they do, incidentally). You can then exploit what you find by, for instance, setting people on fire and then dropping them into trees or houses, thus setting them alight. We just want to keep it as open as possible — to let people try what ever they want, and be rewarded for trying, even if it's nothing to do with the game.



"There are also lots of graphical touches and lots of hidden effects to find. Fish jump out of the water and you can grab these with your hand pointer and drop them on the ground where they flap around. It serves no purpose; it's just something to muck around with — there's tons of stuff like that."

But despite all these graphical niceties, in a game like this it's the computer's Artificial Intelligence (AI) that governs whether it'll be a success or a failure. Make the game too tough and it'll become frustrating, make it too easy and it'll become very boring. Creative Edge has taken a novel approach to the AI...

"We're developing the AI by playing the game over a network and then analysing just how various people approach it," explains Wightman. "Rather than just sitting down, working out how the computer *should* play when perfect and then going backwards, we just watch people playing and try to emulate a human opponent. This way you can copy characteristics that you wouldn't necessarily think of, and code them into the game.

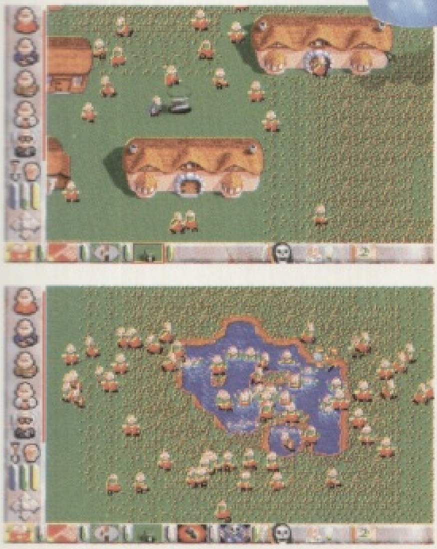


(Above) If you leave the Baldies alone for too long, they might sneak off for a pee. Keep an eye out for patches of yellow snow...

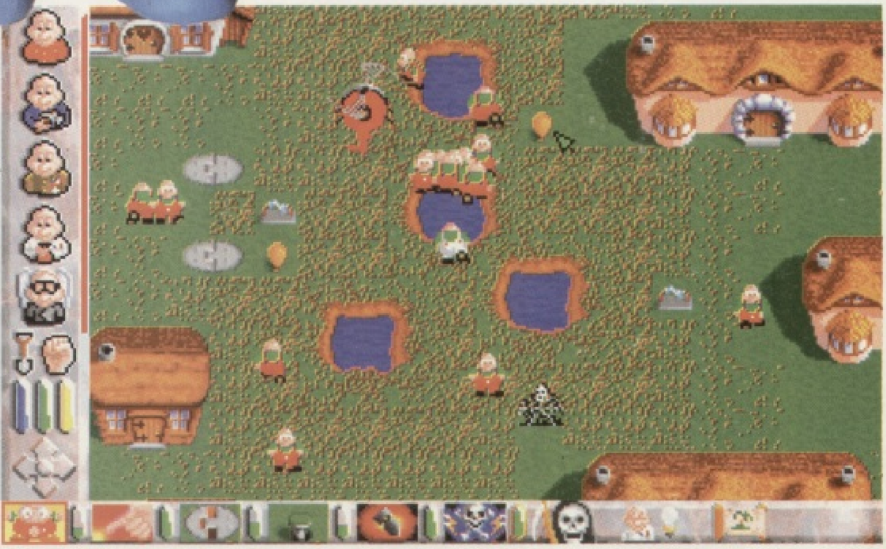
"You can have different levels of intelligence, each with a different emphasis. You'll get opponents who'll breed lots, making them tricky to kill simply because there's so many of them. Then there'll be others that are very clever and build lots of inventions, spreading them around the map. Another opponent might build up tons of soldiers and protect their area.

"The enemy won't always play in the same way over the same scenario. If after two minutes you've built a house and put 10 people inside it, the computer won't always steam in for the kill. It might have chosen to spend its time breeding, or put all its efforts into inventions. The CPU might be aggressive, or it might breed until it knows it has about 50% more people than you, then turn them into soldiers and attack."

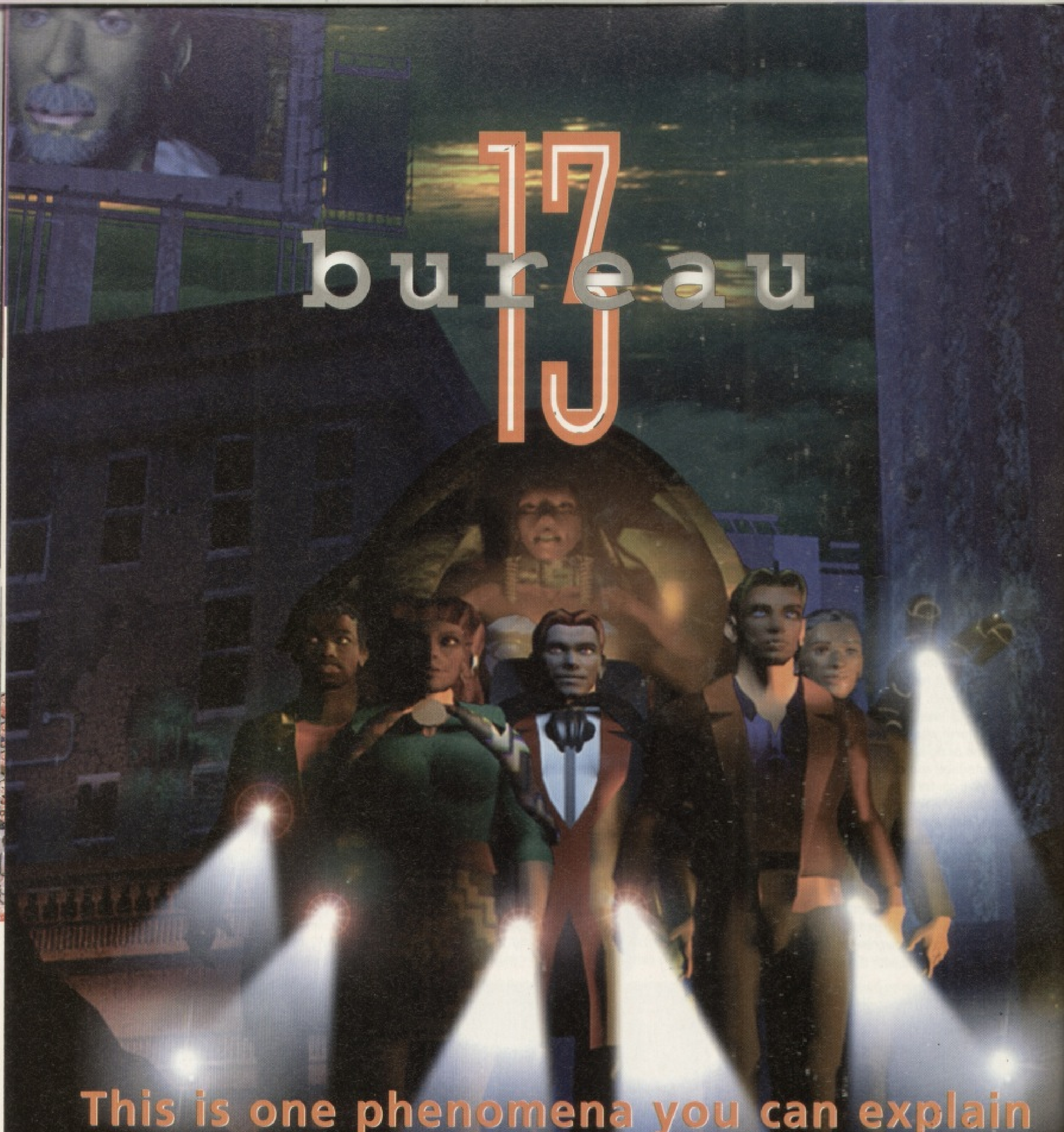
So there you have it — Baldies, the game that GameTek hopes will do for shiny-topped humanoids what Lemmings did for suicidal rodents. Oh, and please try to keep your hair on, because we should have a full review next month.



(Above) How many Baldies can you have on-screen? Er, I don't know — but as you can see here, it's quite a lot.



(Above) Although your scientists are pretty useless at first, making nothing more than a mess, after a while they'll learn how to create bigger and even deadlier weapons, such as the red helicopter shown here.



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Aliens...

Part 2

In the second part of our in-depth Aliens preview, Alex Simmons returns to the distant planet Cryo and discovers that, this time, it *really* is war.

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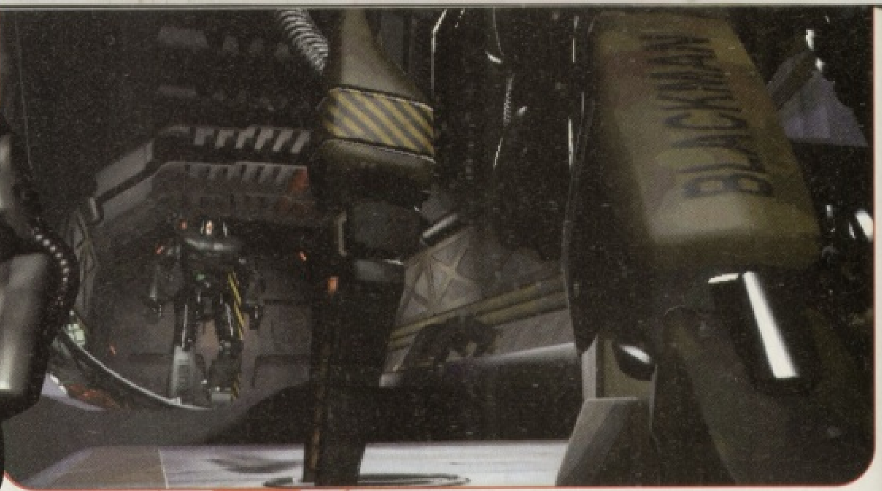


Game	**Aliens**
Publisher	**Mindscape**
Developer	**Cryo**
Work *started*	**February 1994**
Due for *completion*	**Autumn 1995**

There's nothing more disappointing than staring misty-eyed at a visually staggering interactive movie, only to find that the presentation is just a flimsy veil that barely covers the gaping holes in the gameplay. This was a problem Cryo faced during the conceptual stages of Aliens, one which was even more of relevant considering the Paris-based developers previous track record. Let's be honest, no matter how graphically awe-inspiring they were, both Lost Eden and Dragon Lore were not the most interactive and absorbing of games, were they?

This is where Aliens needed to be different. While the graphics and sound had to be up to Cryo's usually perfect standards, a lot more work was needed on the actual game mechanics. Rather than taking the easy option and plumping for a simple platform blaster ("I did *not* want Aliens to be a shoot-'em-up", states game designer Nicholas Choukroun), Cryo decided to stick with what it knew best — the graphic adventure.

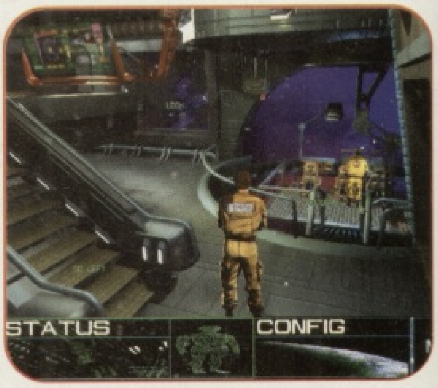
However, Choukroun and his colleagues wanted to make it more than just a graphic adventure. They wanted Aliens to have many of the qualities of the film trilogy but to remain completely playable and, above all, interactive. This was no easy task as you can probably imagine, and Cryo decided to tackle the problem by using awe-inspiring SVGA graphics and a sweeping musical score to create a suitably cinematic air, combined with a radically enhanced hybrid of the Lost Eden game engine and real-time Ultima 8-style isometric-3D combat sections.

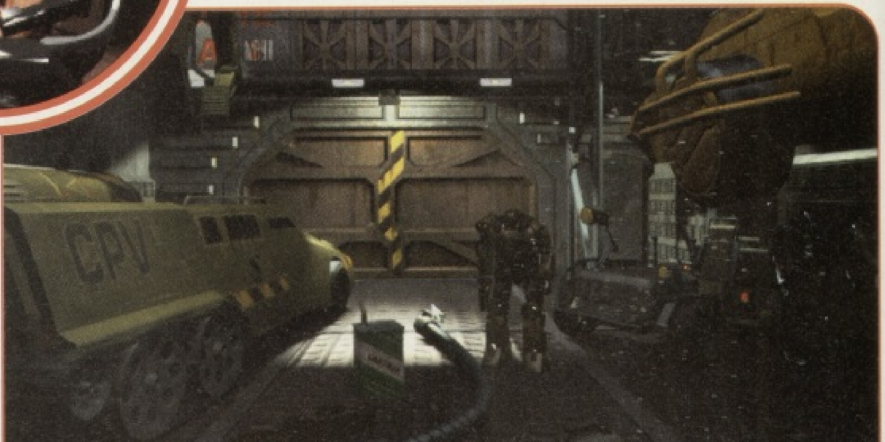
Hang on, did I say just it uses a similar game engine to Lost Eden? Well yes, but don't let that put you off. Although segments of the game are similar in style to Cryo's previous adventure titles, Aliens is not as simple or indeed as linear as, say, Dragon Lore. Many of the puzzles in the game can be solved in almost any order, using the game's simple point-'n'-click cursor system.

Controlling the game is simple: to perform an action, like operate a computer terminal, pick up an object or open a door, simply move the cursor over the item and press the mouse button — it really is that easy. And because Aliens use an intelligent cursor you won't have to hunt around looking for anything of importance as it's automatically highlighted.

Keeping the game simple but still challenging was difficult though, and a lot of effort had to be made to make sure the rooms were perfectly designed so that, while all the objects could be manipulated with ease, their use wasn't immediately apparent. This is where Choukroun spent most of his time, actually working out the mechanics for each of the rooms, as he explains: "All in all, it takes about four weeks to design a room. Once that is done it takes just three or four hours to program." Considering there are over 50 locations in the game, that's a hell of a lot of designing!

(Above) Equipped with hydraulic pincers, Commander Williams' exoskeleton bends down to unlock the cargo bay doors.
(Below) On the bridge of the USS Sheridan, Hericksen can interact with objects or travel to other location simply by moving the cursor and clicking — it really is that easy.
(Middle) Go on, give us a snog...
(Bottom) Although Hericksen and co. spend most of their time in their exoskeletons, the crew get the chance to power up the armoured car and escape from the alien nest.





It's All In The Past

Although Cryo has only notched up a few games in its short existence, many of the forty or so dedicated programmers, artists and game designers based in the company's central Paris office have actually been around for many years, and have worked on projects too numerous to mention here. Cryo was formed just a few years back, after the collapse of ERE Informatique, the developers responsible for the likes of Purple Saturn Day, a weird Galactic Olympics set in the future, and Captain Blood, a space exploration game that was also weird and set in the future.

Cryo evolved through meetings between the now-managing director, Jean Martial LeFranc, and the director of Virgin France. After much negotiation, the core of ERE Informatique where hauled in to program Dune, the first of Cryo's releases. Drawing inspiration from the excellent David Lynch film, Dune was a stunning graphic adventure which proudly placed Cryo on the gaming map.

After Dune, Cryo began work on Mega Race, a hi-tech racing game featuring slick rendered graphics, the likes of which had never been seen before in a computer game. In fact, it was with Mega Race that Cryo earned itself a reputation for producing games with lavish presentation, which was strengthened further by the release of Dragon Lore just a few months later. A visually gorgeous RPG cum graphic adventure, Dragon Lore was, unfortunately, seriously lacking in those oh-so-important gameplay stakes.

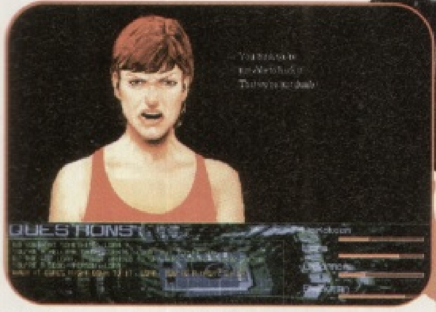
Cryo then turned its attention to the sequel to the archaic Captain Blood, entitled Commander Blood. Just as bizarre as the first game, the sequel was visually spectacular and one of the more original releases of the last few months.

With Lost Eden (reviewed in Issue 10 of PC GAMES), Cryo continued their rather disturbing tradition of awesome graphics but very little in the way of gameplay, although it is a great improvement over Dragon Lore. This gradual, although important, step forward just goes to show that Cryo are slowly picking up speed and, with their next generation of releases now on the horizon, proves that they are now a force to be reckoned with.

Another time-consuming aspect of Aliens was making sure the characters acted realistically but also retained their comic-book feel. Cryo tackled this by using hand-drawn portraits which were then scanned in and touched up. In fact, the character paintings are the only graphics throughout the game which aren't rendered, the grainy, gritty facial images contrasting brilliantly against the computer-generated backgrounds which look almost sterilised in comparison.

The crew were then brought to life by giving each of them specific character traits, determining how they react to each other as well as how they act under pressure. "Like a role-playing game, each character has their own statistics, their own individual strengths and weaknesses. They are also rated for health, hunger and morale", reveals Choukroun. Although the health and hunger statistics are fairly self-explanatory, Choukroun explains further that "morale is used in the conversations".

Discussions play an important part of the game, as they are effectively the only way the four crew members can share their views and act as a team. Although relatively simple at first glance, the conversation structure in Aliens is, in fact, extremely complex, as there are literally thousands of responses for the questions the crew will face throughout the game.



During the conversations, carefully choose your response to get the most information out of the person you're talking with.

This is just one of the many rendered images that feature in Aliens. We'll be taking a closer look at the game's presentation in the concluding part of our in-depth preview in next month's issue of PC GAMES.

Lock And Load — We're Moving In...

As the game slowly unfolds and the USS Sheridan touches down on planet B54C, the crew leaves the safety of the ship and sets foot in the ransacked colony, kitted out in their exoskeletons. Although much of the game is spent manipulating objects to solve puzzles, all-too-often the formidable foursome walk are ambushed by Aliens and battle ensues.

As the game developed, Cryo decided to drastically change the combat system, as Aliens' project leader, Nicholas Choukroun, explains: "At first I wanted to make a real-time Creature Shock-style shoot-'em-up, but in the end I opted for a isometric-3D system a bit like LBA, although more simple [in terms of control] but more strategic [when it comes to combat]."

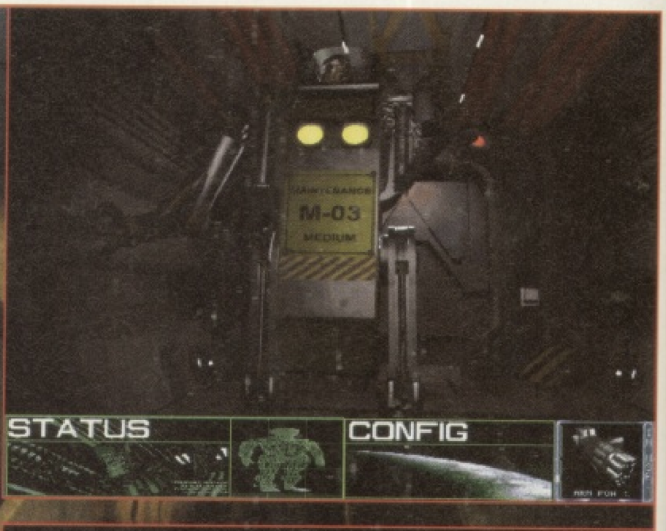
Like the rest of the game, all the battles are depicted in glorious SVGA and both the backgrounds and the character sprites have all been rendered in 3D Studio. Hericksen's exoskeleton alone boasts over a thousand frames of animation which enables it to walk smoothly, as well as perform other actions — like fire its weapons — with the utmost realism.

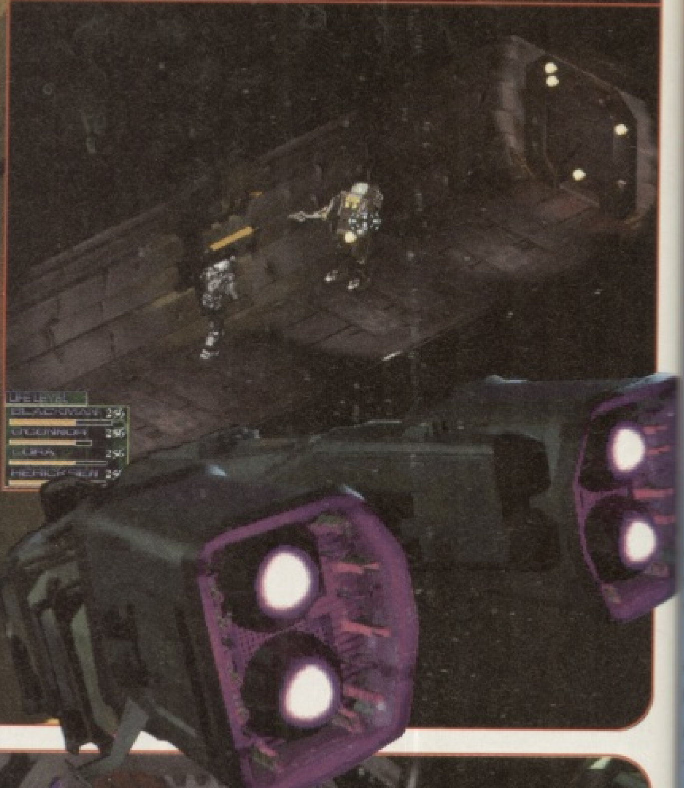
Likewise, the enemy sprites, which are anything from manic robots to Face-Huggers to fully-grown Aliens, are equally detailed, and stagger, sprint and claw their way across the beautifully intricate chambers and dimly-lit corridors.

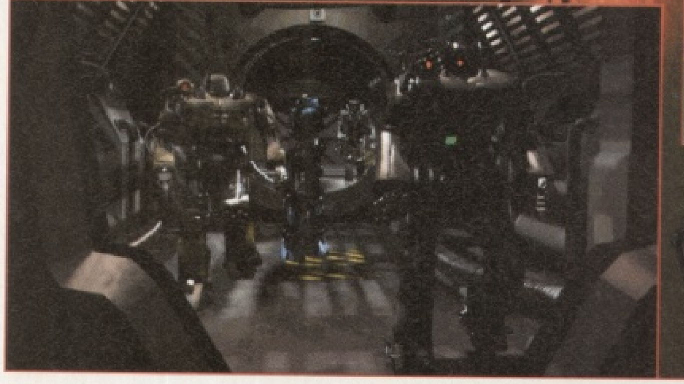
During combat only Hericksen can fight. According to the storyline this is because he's an ex-marine and is the only character to have weapons bolted onto his exoskeleton. A more likely reason for Hericksen fighting alone is processing power. Taking into account the extreme detail of both the on-screen sprites and the backgrounds, having all four characters moving independently would just be too demanding on the machine. As it is, Aliens looks set to be a 'Pentium recommended' game so making the game any more complicated would be a mistake.

Moving around the screen simply by pointing the cursor and clicking, Hericksen can attack by placing the pointer over the target and pressing the right mouse button. This unleashes a hail of bullets or a barrage of punches and kicks, depending upon which weapon is currently activated.

Although the system isn't quite finished ("There are a few bugs that need ironing out and the collision detection needs tweaking," admits Choukroun), it already works remarkably well, and is vaguely comparable to the hectic blasting of Virgin's Cannon Fodder, although in much greater detail



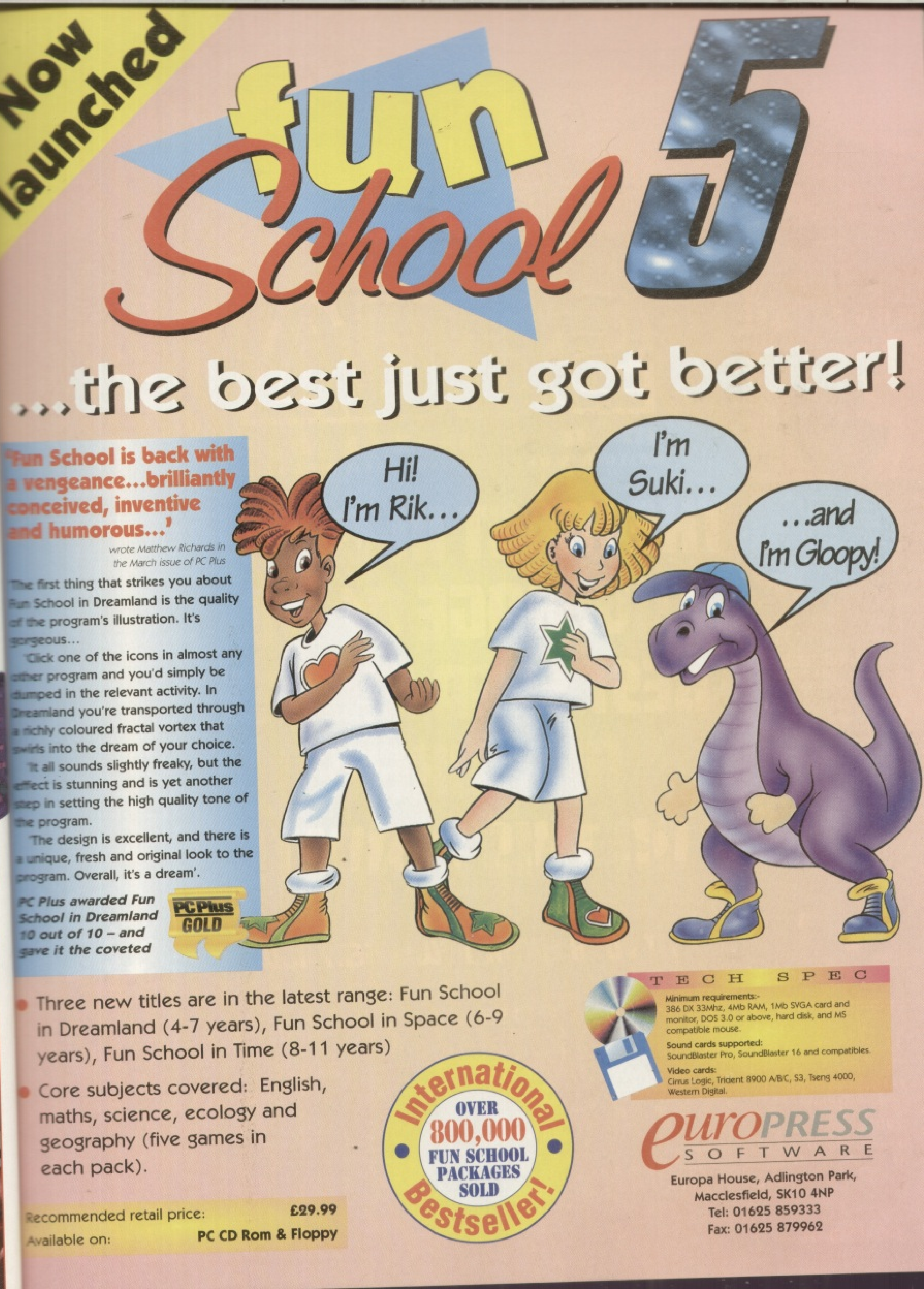




The question you choose will obviously determine the response you are given, but this is affected even further by the morale of the character you're talking to. For example, if Lara is on a low, she'll shout and her answers will be short and snappy. However, if she's feeling good, she'll readily help you out in any way she can.

At the moment, most of the conversations have already ready been designed, with the basic branch structure being programmed into the game as we speak. As Nicholas Choukroun admits, "we've done about 90% of the programming already, although the graphics are only about 70% complete", so in actual fact, Aliens isn't *that* far from completion.

Essentially it's just the remaining segments of the game that need to be finalised before the presentation is then tidied up. Which is what we'll be concentrating on next month in the concluding part of our Aliens preview, in which we speak to Aliens artist Bernard Bittler as he describes the problems involved in trying to bring a comic book to life.



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wrote Matthew Richards in the March issue of PC Plus

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'Click one of the icons in almost any other program and you'd simply be dumped in the relevant activity. In Dreamland you're transported through a richly coloured fractal vortex that swirls into the dream of your choice.

'It all sounds slightly freaky, but the effect is stunning and is yet another step in setting the high quality tone of the program.

'The design is excellent, and there is a unique, fresh and original look to the program. Overall, it's a dream'.

PC Plus awarded Fun School in Dreamland 10 out of 10 – and gave it the coveted

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TECH SPEC

Minimum requirements:-
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Sound cards supported:
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Video cards:
Cirrus Logic, Trident 8900 A/B/C, S3, Tseng 4000, Western Digital.

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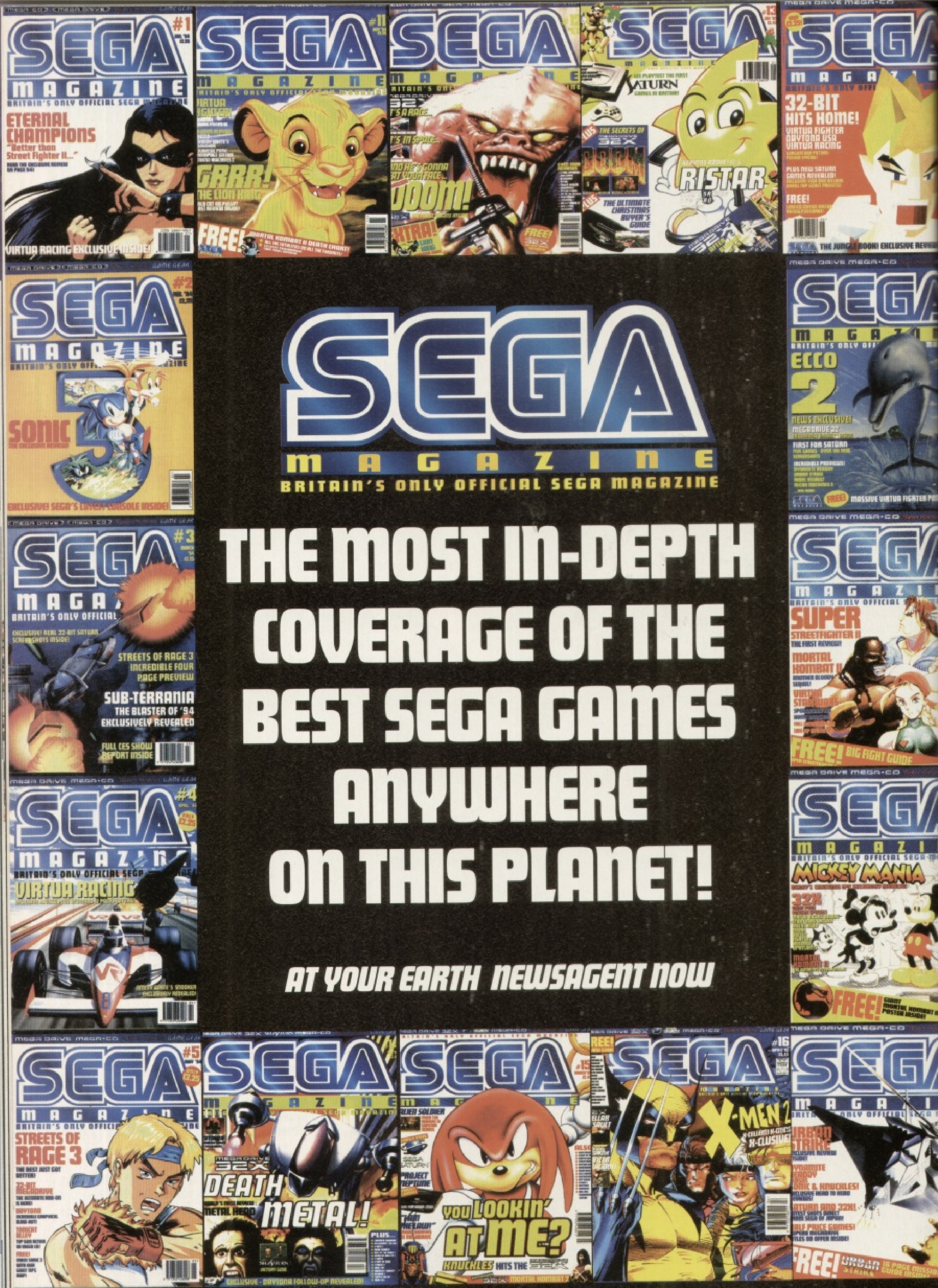

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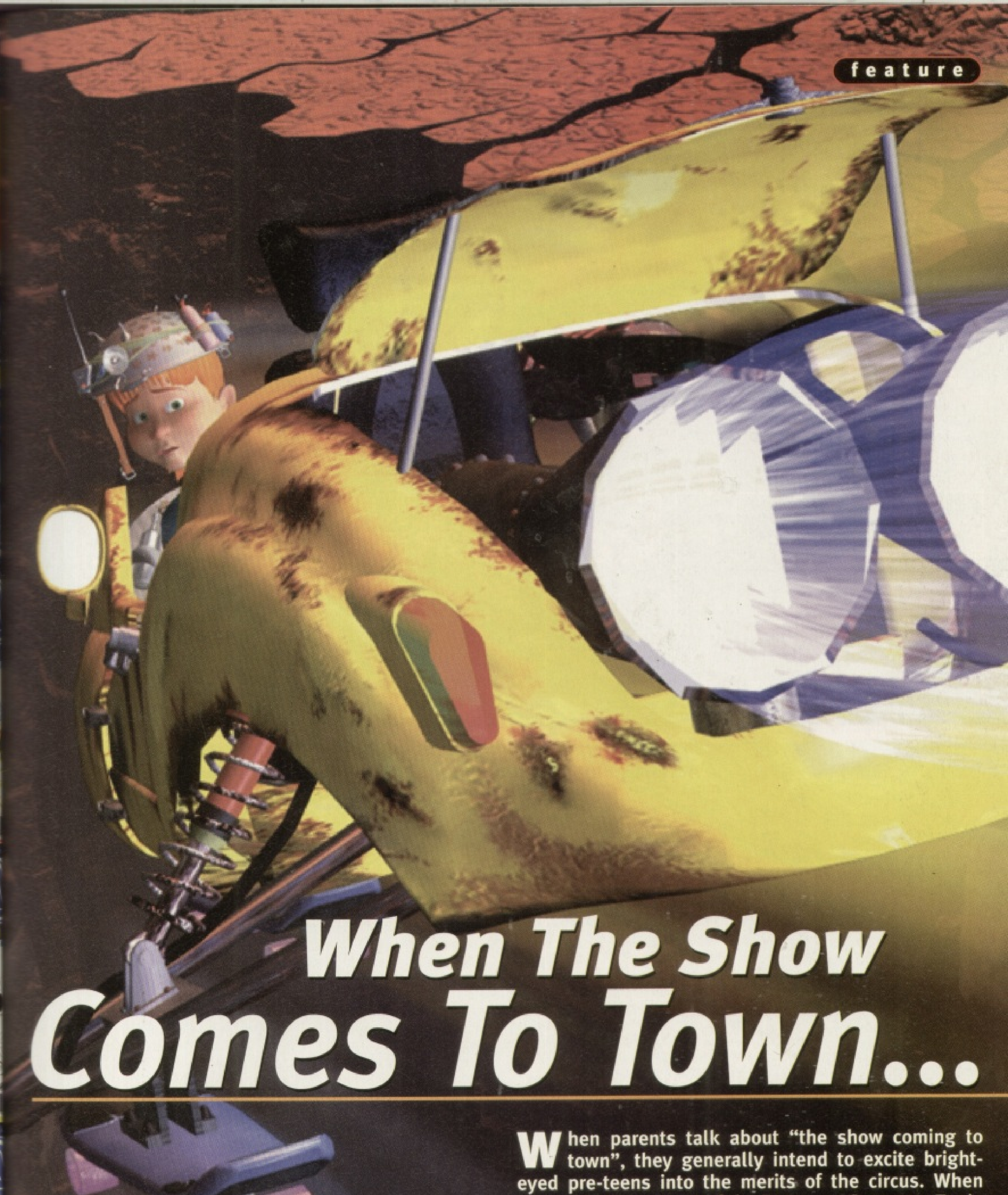


When The Show Comes To Town...

When parents talk about "the show coming to town", they generally intend to excite bright-eyed pre-teens into the merits of the circus. When quoted in the context of the European Computer Trade Show, which took place at Olympia a couple of months back, it involves anorak-clad journos scrambling over each other in an effort to see and get the best games. The PC GAMES crew donned their dufflecoats and managed to kick everybody else out of the way, to bring you this selection of what we considered to be the best of the show...

Heart Of Darkness

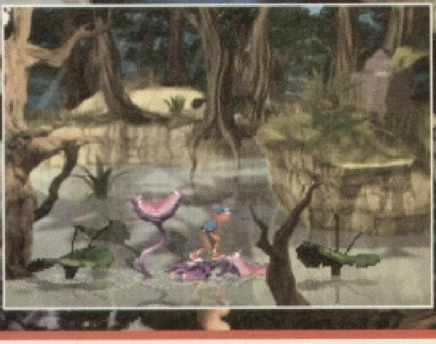
Virgin Interactive/Amazing Studio

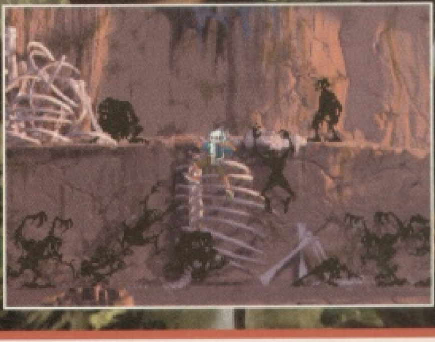
When a small boy named Adam ventures into the dark, foreboding wood to look for his dog, it's apparent that canine-kidnapping is not the only evil afoot. What awaits Adam is an arcade adventure into a nightmare fantasy, and unless he's packed a spare pair of kecks it's gonna get very messy indeed.

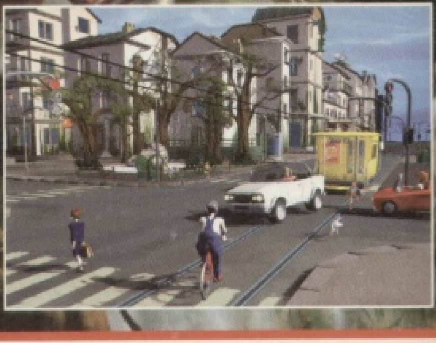
Now although dog-rescuing sounds more like a plot for one of the Broderbund Edutainment range, Heart Of Darkness is actually a far cry from Fun School 5. In terms of game mechanics it adopts a rather adult approach, but the thing that makes even the driest-mouthed CD-ROM enthusiast slaver uncontrollably is the absolutely stunning visuals.

One of the most visually staggering games *ever*, Heart Of Darkness combines Flashback-style platform action (which is hardly surprising, considering the guy repsonisble for Another World and Flashback also has a key role in the development of HOD) with absolutely staggering cartoon-style cutscenes. In all honesty, HOD (with that sort of acronym, it sounds more like a game about the trade plied in Auf Wiedersen Pet) was *the* most exciting product at the ECTS and is well-worth keeping a beady eye on.

● *Heart Of Darkness will be released in October.*





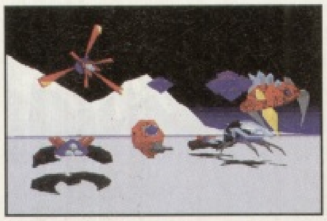


Absolute Zero

Domark

Domark's PC history is sketchy to say the least, but it looks as if it's making a bid to put itself on the map with Absolute Zero. Plotwise we're not talking of anything special. I mean, how many times have you heard about space colonies on other planets? And you've certainly not been starved of Jupiter-related tomfoolery and alien-based war scenarios. But the game does strike a chord with its rather special 3D texture-mapped graphics, and what's more there are loads of vehicles to fly in this 3D futuristic sim. Quite frankly, if you're going to do another three-dimensional space battle simulator, making it look this good would be a start.

● *Absolute Zero will be released in May.*

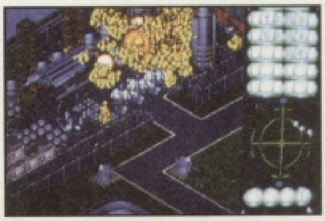


The Adrenalin(e) Factor

Mirage

We've had a fair share of isometric-3D strategy games recently. There was X-COM: Terror From The Deep, UFO, and, well, erm, er, that's about it. Actually when you come to think of it, there's a hole the size of a 24 bus to squeeze The Adrenalin(e) Factor into, and like a gaming jigsaw piece, Mirage's Syndicate-style blaster should fit the bill quite nicely. You get to take control of a team of robots as you attempt to rid the World of the Bio-Mechs. There are five gigantic levels and in each you're given a squad of 'bots armed with mini-nukes with which to blast the b'jesus out of the enemy's genetic army. One of the game's most noteable features is that the action can be viewed from one of the robot's head-mounted cameras, as well as the smart animations that feature throughout.

● *The Adrenalin(e) Factor should be released at the end of the year.*



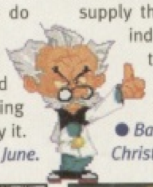
AIV Networks

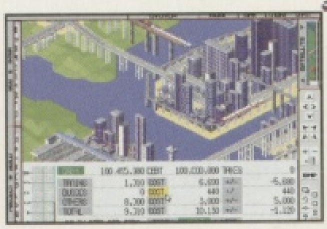
Infogrames

If planes, trains and automobiles are your cup of tea, it would have to be a very large cup and would take yonks to boil the water needed to make a decent cuppa. Now it may sound as though I'm talking bollards, but there's a metaphor in here somewhere. Where? Well, it'll take yonks to discover all that's within AIV Networks! (Oh dear — Dave.)

It's a sim/management game, you see, and is based around the wonderful world of transport. That's not all there is to it though, as AIV also boasts the most comprehensive corporate dealings you'll ever be inspired to undertake without being commandeered to run British Rail (and let's face it, most of us have too many 'O' levels to do that). Although this sounds frighteningly similar to Transport Tycoon, it looks twice as deep and currently has the Japanese falling over themselves in the rush to buy it.

● *AIV Networks will be released in June.*





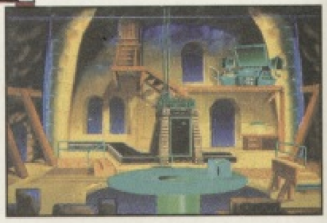
Bazooka Sue

Krisalis

Interactive adventures (or point-'n'-click adventures as I prefer to call them) usually have one thing in common — they all have blokes assuming the lead role. In fact you could probably count the number of heroine-inspired adventures on the fingers of a horse's hoof. So it comes as a pleasant surprise to learn that Krisalis' Bazooka Sue has a babe in the central role. Not just any old babe though, as Sue is a centrefold who regularly poses for 'those' magazines.

Games like this generally live or die on the quality of the graphics and the interaction, but while I can't guarantee gameplay to equal Day Of The Tentacle, I will say that hiring a 'real' animator to supply the visuals was a wise move indeed. Bazooka Sue also features its fair share of sauce, so get ready to reach up to the top shelf for this one.

● *Bazooka Sue will be released at Christmas.*



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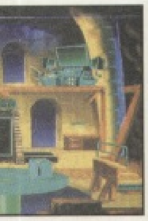


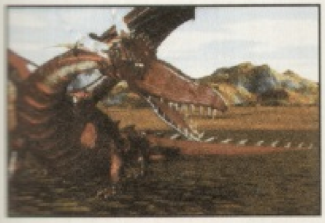
Conqueror — AD 1086

Time Warner Interactive

Conqueror — AD 1086 is four games in one, Medievally-flavoured package. There's action/adventure, strategy, role-playing and tactical combat all crammed into one game, but the highlight of the game is the jousting sections which look absolutely wonderful. The horses are beautifully rendered and come hurtling towards you in 3D like a flood of commuters arriving home for the weekend, or something.

So what's the score? You have to build and control the strongest fief (there is such a thing, honest) in 11th Century Britain, and Time Warner have researched hard to make sure all the historical details are exact. Domination is achieved in a number of ways and you can use "a combination of politics, warfare and [get this] marriage" to reach your goal. I knew tying the knot was good for something.

● *Conqueror — AD 1086 will be released in late Summer.*

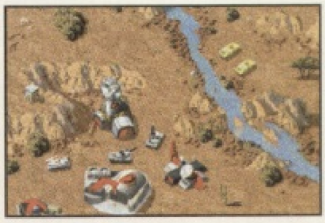


Command & Conquer

Virgin Interactive

Okay, I'll admit it, Command & Conquer is a wargame, but it's not just any old battle sim, no sirree. Basically it use real-time gameplay, like Dune 2 and unlike so many other wargames which are turn-based (yawn-a-rama!). This makes the game much more action-packed and, combined with the juiciest graphics ever seen in this particular forum, Command & Conquer looks *very* good indeed. The game also has other major features that it proffers as the best. There's the unique ability to play as either the good or bad guys, and there's also the option to play via a modem, network or serial link. On top of that, there's even a rather funky rap/hip-hop soundtrack thumping away in the background — that'll scare off the trainspotters!

● *Command & Conquer will be released in June.*



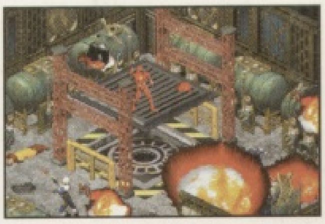
Crusader: No Remorse

EA/Origin

If you're going to make a prediction you may as well make it 220 years into the future, then at least you'll be dead when the kids of tomorrow realise you were actually talking out of your butt! Crusader: No Remorse, the latest game from gaming gods Origin, sees a Consortium rising to overpower and take control the earth, devastating the the globe during the bloody battle that follows. As the Enforcer, you lead the assault to crush the evil oppressors in this Terminator-style storyline.

The action-packed plot is accompanied by over one and a half hours of live action video, fully-rendered characters, and enough blood-letting to get Mary Whitehouse foaming at the mouth! Cram-packed with puzzles and gorgeous graphics, Crusader looks like a cross between BioForge and Ultima 8. Now does that sound good or what?

● *Crusader: No Remorse will be released in September.*



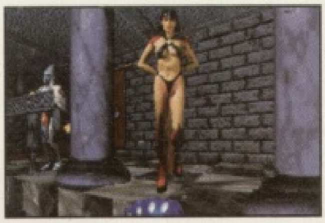
Cybermage: Darklight Awakening

EA/Origin

Coming from the creators of System Shock, you'd certainly be excused for assuming that Cybermage: Darklight Awakening is the follow-up to its excellent space-age cousin. But no. While Cybermage is action-packed and uses the same first-person viewpoint, it also includes its fair share of puzzles to challenge the usual swarms of Doomheads looking for their next fix.

There's also a variety of different 3D texture-mapped terrains to negotiate, including caves, inner-city slums and forests, giving a more rounded feel to the explorable environment. Origin itself is heralding the game engine as an interactive comic book, but I personally have never felt like blowing the ultra-sensitive parts off Dennis The Menace... or have I?

● *Cybermage: Darklight Awakening will be released in June.*



Dungeon Keeper

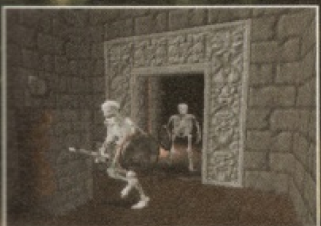
Bullfrog

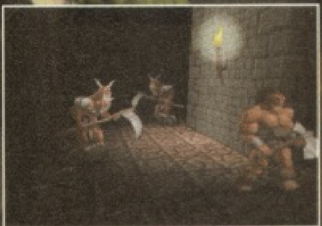
The mention of a role-playing game usually brings about two responses. Firstly, you get the enthusiast who runs off to slip into their orc's outfit and unsheath their rubber sword, then insists you call him Snorkbait. And then there's the sceptic who laughs at said enthusiast and denies that they ever get the urge to guide a bunch of lame adventurers through a grubby old dungeon. But Dungeon Keeper from Bullfrog is about to change all this.

For the sceptic it's a chance to get your own back. Why? Because you actually get to play the supreme master in control of the dungeon, rather than the hapless heroes wandering aimlessly through its dank corridors. What this basically means is that every single monster in the dungeon is under your control, the aim of the game being to fight back against the do-gooders with this army of sword-swinging skeletons and create the most wickedly fiendish dungeon with the resources provided. Exploring the texture-mapped dungeon in either first- or second-person perspective, the adventurers you're battling against use an advanced form of artificial intelligence called 'behavioural cloning', which means they learn from your actions and adapt their style of attack accordingly, therefore tailoring the game difficulty to suit each individual player.

A novel approach to a staid genre, Dungeon Keeper is a great twist on the RPG theme. And with the inclusion of a multi-player mode, this promises to be the game every dungeon hack has been waiting for.

● *Dungeon Keeper will be released this Christmas.*





I Have No Mouth, And I Must Scream

Cyberdreams

And the winner of this year's Oscar for the game with the most peculiar name goes to... Probably not I Have No Mouth, But I Must Scream — but it came close. But then it would also have to have won the award for the most odd short story title, as the game itself is based on a Harlan Ellison novella (one of the ten most reprinted in the English language, we're reliably informed).

It's an adventure game with the (almost) unique aspect of allowing you to take control of no less than five major characters, as you trudge around a post-apocalyptic world aiming to defeat a super-computer who has already managed to rid the planet of humanity. The game uses 40 characters in total, all with CD digitised speech, and 3D animation techniques ne'er seen before.

● I Have No Mouth, And I Must Scream will be released in late Summer.

Jetfighter III

US Gold

As sequels go, Jetfighter III had a pretty good older sister to borrow its lipstick (or should that be joystick) from. Jetfighter II was ace, and a must buy for flight sim buffs everywhere. And Jetfighter III not only promises to better it with relish, it'll chuck in the bap and the beef patty too.

For a start, the ground is fully texture-mapped, giving an almost realistic feel to hurtling thousands of feet over good old terra firma. Then there's a 3D virtual cockpit that allows you to wander your 'virtual' eyes over the instrumentation at will, without awkward key presses. One thing to note is that I'm not sure if the game'll be compatible with virtual reality headsets (like the Cybermaxx or the V1) but wouldn't that be a rush if it was? Hmmm...

● *Jetfighter III will be released in May.*

Magic Carpet 2

Bullfrog

How do you better the best? Magic Carpet has already been showered in accolades from near and far, including several honours in both innovation and general best game fashions at the recent ECTS Awards. But if anybody can do it, surely Bullfrog can — look at Populous 2, for example.

Essentially the game engine has been speeded up dramatically — if that were indeed possible — and there will be new underground and night-time levels to negotiate (as well as updated original-style ones). Also, as well as the good old blasting-related action, now cunning puzzles will have to be solved and special tasks will have to be performed before the levels can be fully completed. And as if that's not all, Magic Carpet 2 will have a multi-player mode too. Ooh... Aren't we just spoilt sometimes?

● *Magic Carpet 2 will be released in September.*

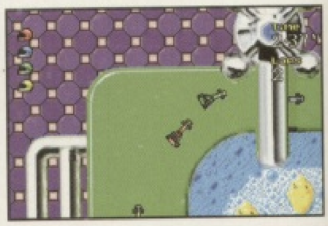
Micro Machines 2

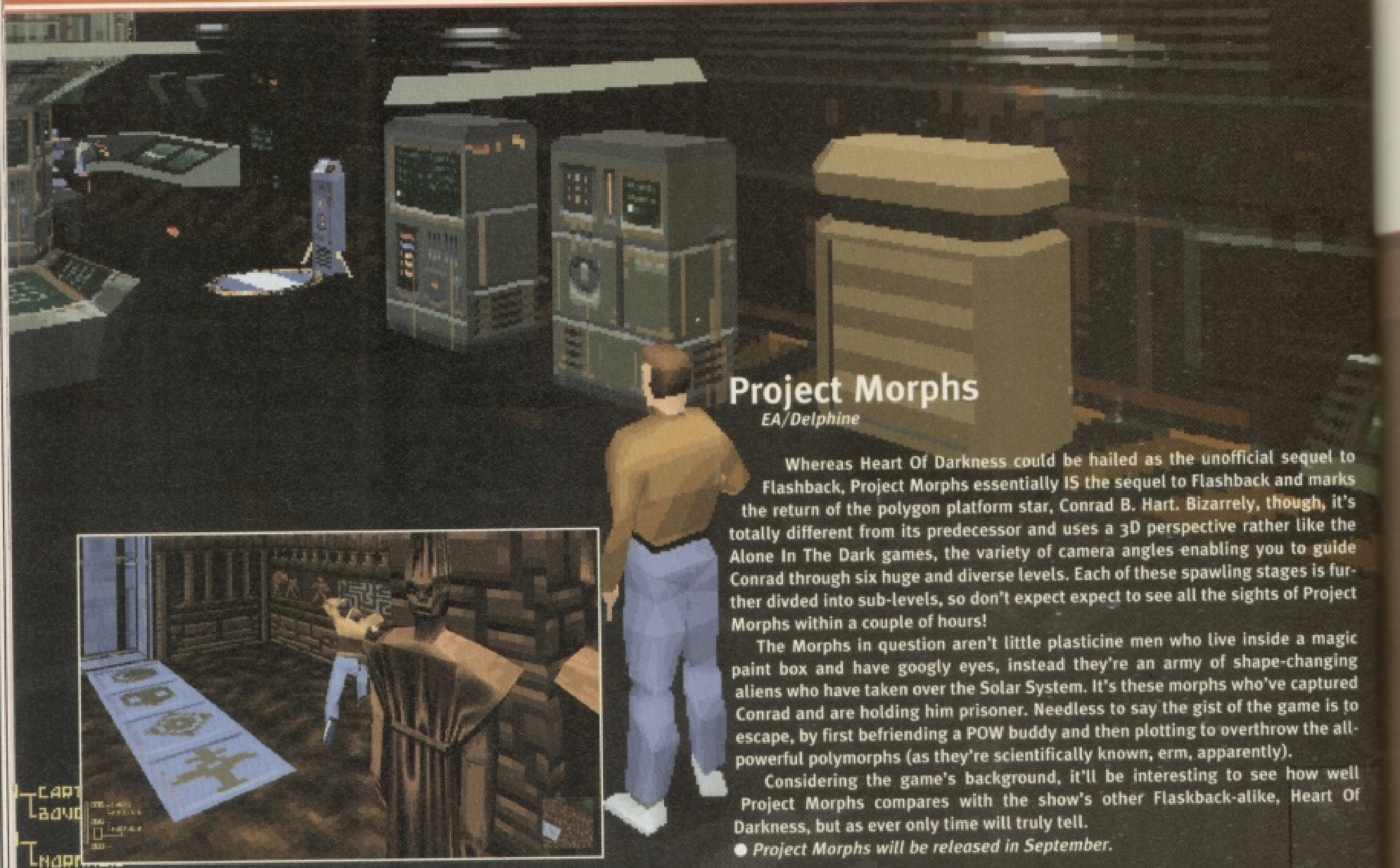
Codemasters

Micro Machines was one of the most playable little devils you were ever likely to get your hands on. Its wide variety of tracks, brilliant two-player action and sheer simplicity made it ooze class, and now here's Micro Machines 2 (one of the umpteen very impressive sequels unveiled at the show) to carry on the grand tradition.

Top-down racing games have always been fun in my opinion, especially when, like Micro Machines 2, they present you with the opportunity to cram yourself and three mates around your PC and race against each other. In all there's 51 tracks to race on and 17 different vehicles to drive. And, if you're getting bored of all of that little lot, the PC CD-ROM version also features a track designer for those who still pine for the days before the little bristly bits on the bottom of their Scalextric cars dropped off.

● *Micro Machines 2 will be released in June.*





Project Morphs

EA/Delphine

Whereas Heart Of Darkness could be hailed as the unofficial sequel to Flashback, Project Morphs essentially IS the sequel to Flashback and marks the return of the polygon platform star, Conrad B. Hart. Bizarrely, though, it's totally different from its predecessor and uses a 3D perspective rather like the Alone In The Dark games, the variety of camera angles enabling you to guide Conrad through six huge and diverse levels. Each of these spawling stages is further divded into sub-levels, so don't expect expect to see all the sights of Project Morphs within a couple of hours!

The Morphs in question aren't little plasticine men who live inside a magic paint box and have googly eyes, instead they're an army of shape-changing aliens who have taken over the Solar System. It's these morphs who've captured Conrad and are holding him prisoner. Needless to say the gist of the game is to escape, by first befriending a POW buddy and then plotting to overthrow the all-powerful polymorphs (as they're scientifically known, erm, apparently).

Considering the game's background, it'll be interesting to see how well Project Morphs compares with the show's other Flaskback-alike, Heart Of Darkness, but as ever only time will truly tell.

● ***Project Morphs will be released in September.***

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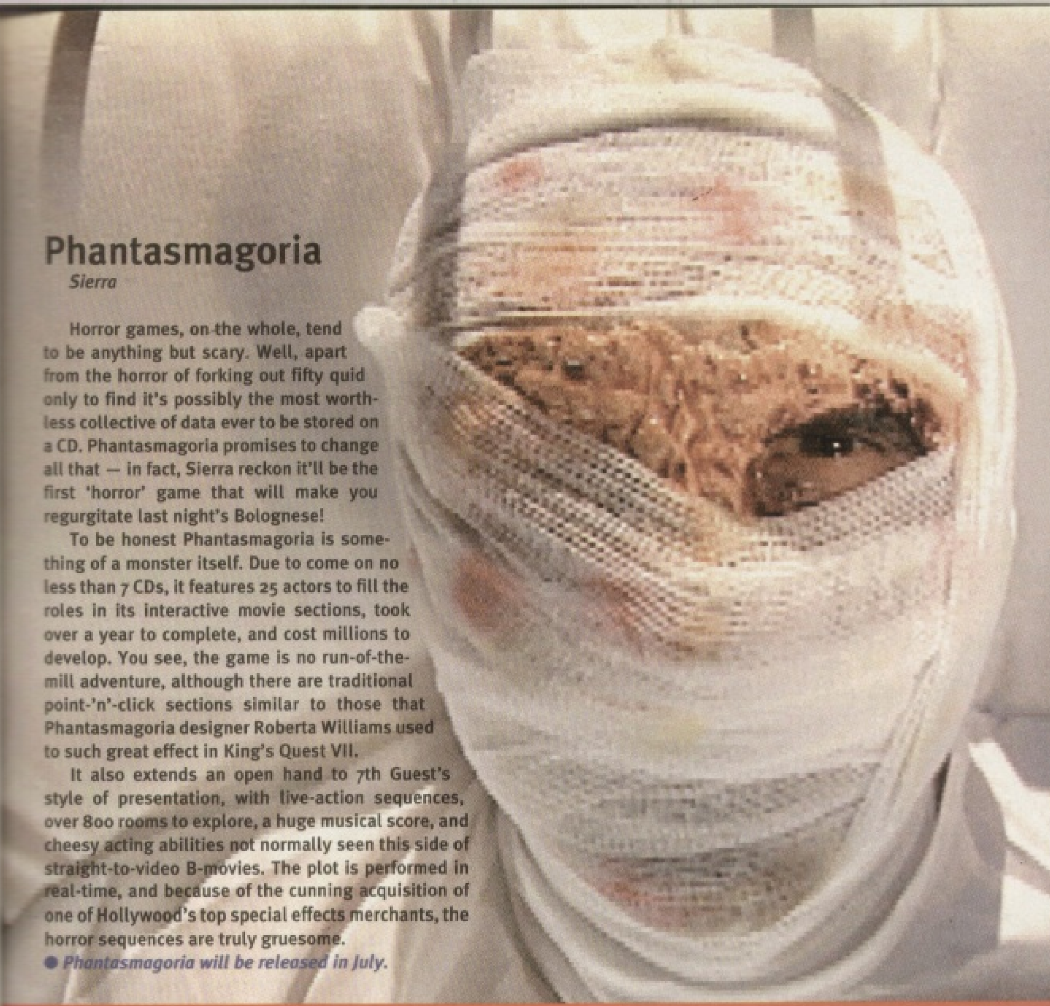


Phantasmagoria

Sierra

Horror games, on the whole, tend to be anything but scary. Well, apart from the horror of forking out fifty quid only to find it's possibly the most worthless collective of data ever to be stored on a CD. Phantasmagoria promises to change all that — in fact, Sierra reckon it'll be the first 'horror' game that will make you regurgitate last night's Bolognese!

To be honest Phantasmagoria is something of a monster itself. Due to come on no less than 7 CDs, it features 25 actors to fill the roles in its interactive movie sections, took over a year to complete, and cost millions to develop. You see, the game is no run-of-the-mill adventure, although there are traditional point-'n'-click sections similar to those that Phantasmagoria designer Roberta Williams used to such great effect in King's Quest VII.

It also extends an open hand to 7th Guest's style of presentation, with live-action sequences, over 800 rooms to explore, a huge musical score, and cheesy acting abilities not normally seen this side of straight-to-video B-movies. The plot is performed in real-time, and because of the cunning acquisition of one of Hollywood's top special effects merchants, the horror sequences are truly gruesome.

- *Phantasmagoria will be released in July.*

M.I.S.T.

Bullfrog

M.I.S.T. is only a working title — after all, we've already had a game with a similar name before. It's an acronym for My Incredible Superhero Team and the package sounds as if it could well be the most exciting Bullfrog release ever.

Basically, it offers you the chance to do something that everybody at one point or another has always wanted to do, and that is... Create your own superhero team (all right, who said "Chuck Alex off the Empire State building"? Oh it was you, mum!) You can build an almost infinite number of different potential heroes (or heroines) using vector parts for their bodies, assign them different powers and, using a modified Magic Carpet engine, send them out to do good. Another interesting aspect is that the enemies use a technique called 'behavioural cloning', which means they learn your tactics as you go and adapt to them in the future. Can't you see I'm salivating already?

- *M.I.S.T. is due for release in November.*

Z

Warner Interactive Entertainment

And the prize for the shortest ever name for a game goes to... Z, the forthcoming action/strategy romp from those coding legends, The Bitmap Brothers. However, unlike the Bros' previous games, such as Speedball 2 and The Chaos Engine, Z has been developed primarily for the PC.

Z's gameplay is very similar to Dune 2's, but the emphasis is more on action and less on building up resources. As commander of a squad of droids, it's your task to destroy the enemy robot base at the far end of each battlefield, of which there are 25 in all. As well as robots there are tanks, missile launchers and gun turrets to control.

The Bitmaps claim that the game's advanced AI will provide a strong strategic challenge for armchair tacticians of all abilities, and failing that there's the option to play head-to-head over serial link-ups and networks.

- *Z will be released in September.*

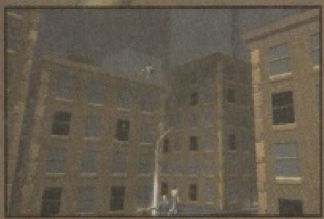
Rollcage

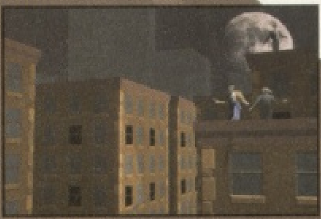
Team 17

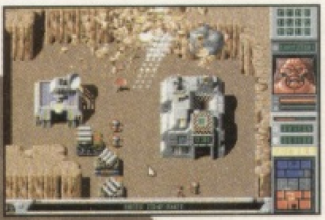
There's no doubt that the current type of games that make arcade enthusiasts and console owners alike go "Wow!" are the ones that feature white-knuckle rally driving. They've got both Ridge Racer and Daytona, and now we're about to be swamped in a plethora of texture-mapped 3D racing games too, with Rollcage looking set to be the leader of the pack.

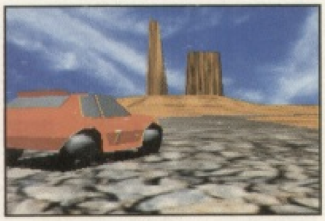
It's an off-road game, and lives more in the realms of dirt-track racing than the tarmac-clad streets most games plump for. The graphics are mightily awesome, and considering that this beast will even run on a 486 with but 33MHz, it means that accessibility is at a premium. Another welcome feature is that you can — and this certainly seems to be the catchphrase at the moment — link up to five other PCs through a network and have six human-controlled cars competing at the same time.

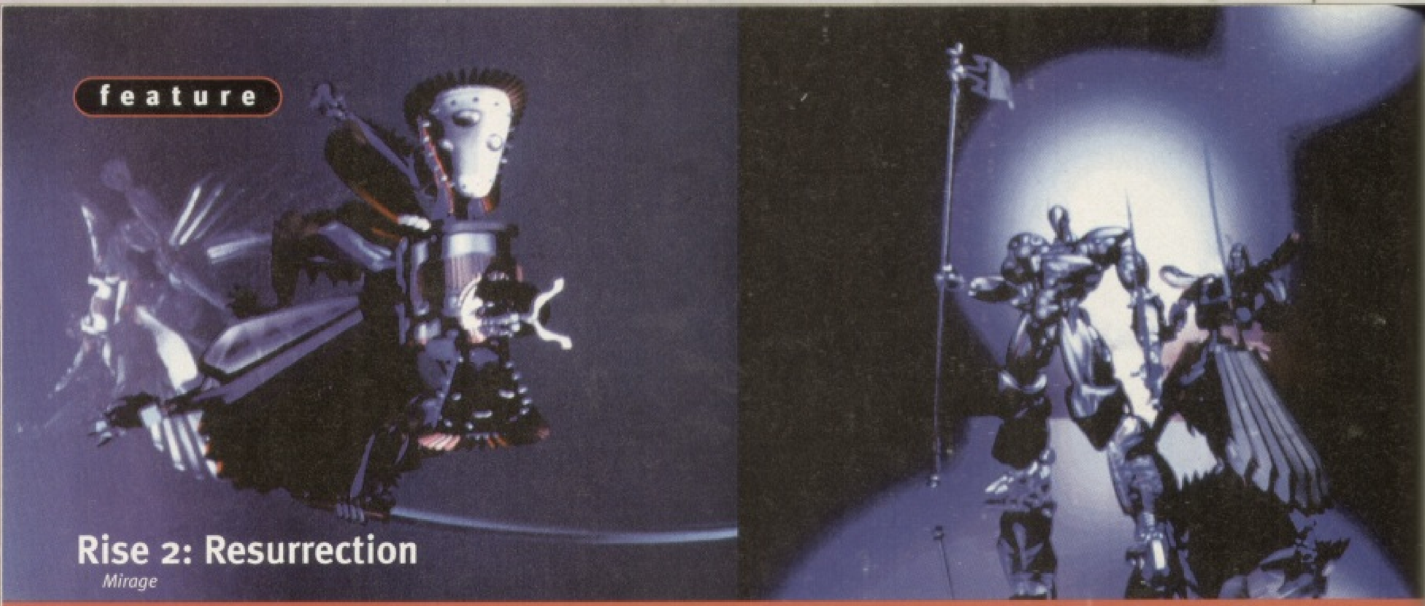
- *Rollcage will be released in October*











Rise 2: Resurrection

Mirage

There's nothing more pleasing than seeing two great hunks of metal beating the chrome out of each other, except perhaps seeing two fully-grown adult men doing much the same. Thus, in an effort to attempt something completely different with the beat-'em-up genre, last year Mirage released Rise Of The Robots. Unfortunately, despite its flashy SVGA rendered graphics and Brian May soundtrack (or maybe because of that), it failed to make quite the impact that it so promised, and was left to rot in the bins along with last year's other 'Big Boss Of The Beat-'Em-Up' wannabes. But now Mirage is ready to make amends and prove that the basic idea behind Rise wasn't a *complete* disaster with the forthcoming sequel, Rise 2: Resurrection.

For a start, there are many more robots involved, and each of them will be more 'user-friendly' and responsive to control. Also, the speed and animation has been cranked right up, so Rise 2 should be a lot more hectic than the first, rather sedate game. Weapons have been added to the fray, and the already excellent rendered background graphics have been tweaked so they look even better than before, if that's at all possible.

Thankfully Rise 2 looks significantly better than the first game, but then it's not how brown the outside of your toasted sandwich looks, it's what kind of filling it has. Let's just say that we wait with baited breath...

● *Rise 2 will be released in the Autumn.*

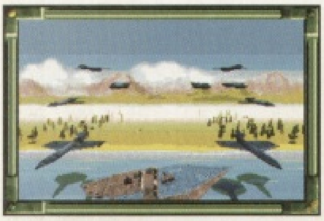
Shadow Of The Empire

Blue Byte

"For decades, devastating wars raged on Chromos. The Drullian armies faced an invincible foe — an enemy they had created themselves. Finally, the mad strategist, Val Harris, succeeds in defeating the mad robot brain..." Crap!!! I really cannot be bothered to relay any more of Shadow Of The Empire's plot to you because it would make you eat your own foot it's so bad. Which is sad, actually, as the game itself has real promise.

Shadow Of The Empire is a wargame crossed with a decent smattering of adventure game larks. Running under Windows, this Battle Isle 2 follow-up uses the medium of CD-ROM to its fullest effect by dragging up digitised action sequences featuring actors without actually interrupting the flow of play itself. It's a cunning combination of Silicon Graphics-rendered illustration screens and old-fashioned, hex-based battle simulation maps, and it all seems to hang together superbly — just like a well-made Marks And Spencer suit. (Who thought I was going to say Armani? Who cares?)

● *Shadow Of The Empire will be released in the Autumn.*

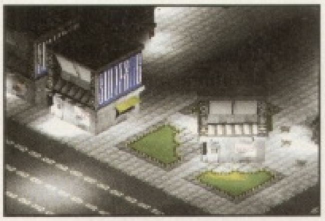


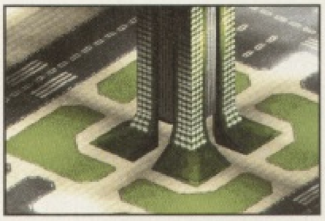
Syndicate Wars

Bullfrog

Us poor old games-starved PC owners (er, that was irony by the way) will have to wait quite a while for the sequel to Syndicate, as it's actually coming out on the Sony Playstation console first. Mind you, it's more than likely to be worth the wait. The game's basics will remain the same as before, although this time there are three major factions competing against each other, and you control the agents who must exterminate them. This time however, the field of view rotates the whole 360°, making it simpler to figure out what is actually going on. And there's a distinctly improved light-sourcing technique in action that'll give the futuristic graphics that little bit more polish.

● *Syndicate Wars will be released in the Spring of 1996.*





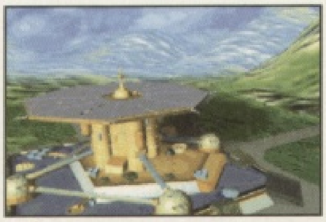
Terra Nova: Strike Force Centauri

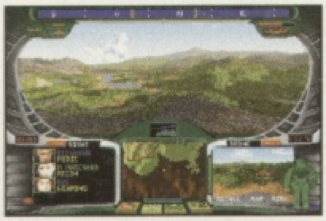
Virgin Interactive

War, good god, what is it good for? About 300,000 sales and a few weeks at the top of the Gallup charts I should imagine. And Terra Nova certainly doesn't shirk its responsibilities in the fighting stakes. Well, you certainly couldn't if you'd signed up for Strike Force Centauri and dropped right into the middle of some alien barny!

Terra Nova: Strike Force Centuri features some absolutely gorgeous rolling fields and battle landscapes, all created using a new 3D graphical utility called the 'Immersive Reality Combat System'. Sadly, I don't know what it means — but it looks bloody impressive.

● *Terra Nova will be released in September.*





Theme Hospital

Bullfrog

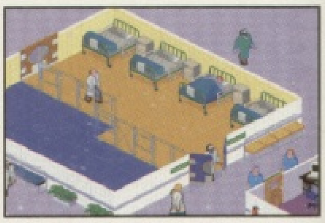
So, with all the killing, maiming and wanton blood-letting witnessed by myself during the course of the show (and that was just in the bar amongst the other journos), it was quite refreshing to know that at the end of the day there's always somewhere safe you can go to get patched up.

Bullfrog's Theme Hospital promises to do for the noble medical profession what Theme Park did for funfair rides and roller-coasters, although this time the little people are throwing up *before* they get inside your establishment rather than after they leave it.

In Theme Hospital the player gets the chance to found a small clinic and then has to build it up into St Elsewhere, or something, with the ultimate aim being to make lots and lots of luvverly money.

Like all Bullfrog games, the style will be very humorous, and so long as Virginia Bottomly keeps her nose out of it the only thing that'll be closed down when Theme Hospital is eventually released will be your social life. Carry on, nurse.

● *Theme Hospital will be released in the Spring of 1996.*



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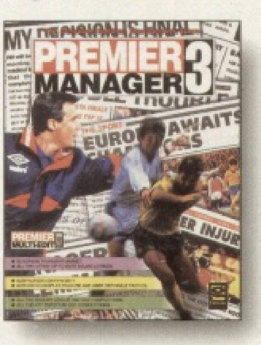
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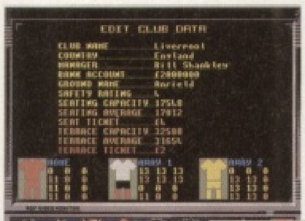

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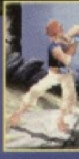
reviews

It's another great month for great games — you won't believe the top-notch quality of some of the new releases reviewed over the page! Long may this continue...



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HOW WE DO WHAT WE DO...

Everyone at PC GAMES is a complete gaming nut. That's why we know exactly what you want to see in a game review (or so we like to think).
So what do you get?

Well, you get all the info you need and no waffling — we get straight to the point. On top of that you get loads of big screenshots of the game in action, along with maps and diagrams helpfully illustrating any major gameplay features — after all a picture, as they say, speaks a thousand words.

Then we compare the big games with another of similar type in the 'It's A Bit Like...' panel. Typically this will be the best game in its genre so you'll probably be pretty familiar with it, thus giving you a handy point of reference.

The whole PC GAMES team plays every game reviewed and, although only one person's name appears on each review, the criticisms and Overall mark reflect all of our combined opinions, hopefully giving you a balanced view. Should any team member disagree violently with the rest, his comments will appear in a special box in the review.

Finally, we have the essential score panel...

All the guff you need to know about who publishes the game, who developed it, its price and when it's due to be released. You even get a contact 'phone number to call if you want more info.

Details the minimum machine specification as recommended by the software company, along with how much valuable hard disk space it takes up and what optional peripherals it'll recognise.

The game's good and bad points, which are basically a concise summary of the criticisms made in the main review.

The Overall Score. We don't see any point in ratings for playability and all that other stuff — you get one mark to sum everything up and that's it.

The coveted PC GAMES STAR is awarded to any game scoring 90% or over, indicating that the game in question is an essential addition to any gamesplayer's software collection.

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MINIMUM SPEC

50MHz 486, VGA, 8Mb RAM, 20Mb of hard disk space, double-speed CD-ROM drive and joystick.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; SVGA; almost every major soundcard.

*THE **GOOD...***

- At last — an 'interactive movie' that actually looks like a movie.
- The dogfighting is tense, exciting and looks fabulous.
- Intriguing plot that keep you hooked from the start.
- Superb SVGA graphics and excellent sound.

*...AND THE **BAD***

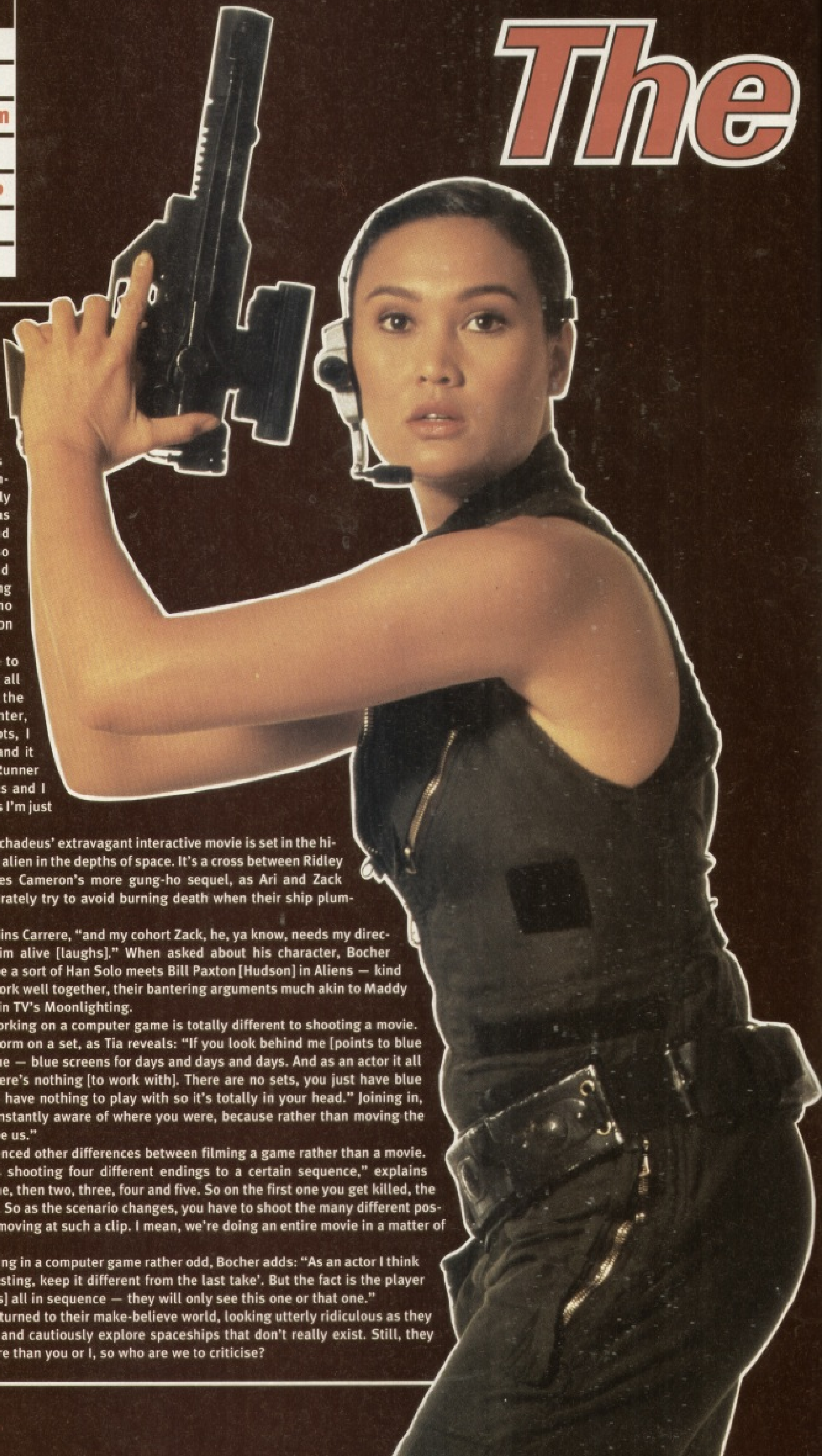
- Needs a monster PC to run at anything near a playable speed.
- The missions lack depth and variety.

Overall

92%

The

Alex Simmons is renowned for dating mega-babes, so to him Tia Carrere is just another wannabe who happens to star in Virgin's FMV epic.



Tia Carrere: Video Game Vixen

For The Daedalus Encounter, developers Mechadeus were keen to have a named actress assume the lead role of Ari. After arduous auditioning and countless screen-tests the gorgeous Tia Carrere finally got the part. Famous for her role as Mike Myer's babe-licious girlfriend in Wayne's World, Carrere has also starred alongside beefcake Arnold Schwarzenegger in the blockbusting spectacular True Lies, so she's no stranger to working on multi-million dollar movies.

So why on Earth did she decide to take a role in a computer game of all things? Speaking on set during the filming of The Daedalus Encounter, Carrere answers: "I read the scripts, I enjoyed the character first of all, and it was exciting and different. Blade Runner is one of my all-time favourite films and I like stuff like Aliens and T2... I guess I'm just a gizmo-phile!"

This is a good thing, because Mechadeus' extravagant interactive movie is set in the hi-tech 22nd Century where man fights alien in the depths of space. It's a cross between Ridley Scott's hyper-tense Alien and James Cameron's more gung-ho sequel, as Ari and Zack (played by Christian Bocher) desperately try to avoid burning death when their ship plummets into a nearby sun.

"I'm the head of the ship", explains Carrere, "and my cohort Zack, he, ya know, needs my direction through space and to keep him alive [laughs]." When asked about his character, Bocher replies: "I wanted my character to be a sort of Han Solo meets Bill Paxton [Hudson] in Aliens — kind of an idiot, kinda brave." The pair work well together, their bantering arguments much akin to Maddy and David's love/hate relationship in TV's Moonlighting.

As you can probably imagine, working on a computer game is totally different to shooting a movie. For starters, you don't actually perform on a set, as Tia reveals: "If you look behind me [points to blue screen] you'll notice nothing but blue — blue screens for days and days and days. And as an actor it all depends on your imagination — there's nothing [to work with]. There are no sets, you just have blue boxes, you have blue spheres...you have nothing to play with so it's totally in your head." Joining in, Christian adds: "You have to be constantly aware of where you were, because rather than moving the camera, they [the filming crew] move us."

Both Carrere and Bocher experienced other differences between filming a game rather than a movie. "The most noticeable difference is shooting four different endings to a certain sequence," explains Carrere. "First there's alternative one, then two, three, four and five. So on the first one you get killed, the next he [Zack] gets killed and so on. So as the scenario changes, you have to shoot the many different possibilities for the player. We're also moving at such a clip. I mean, we're doing an entire movie in a matter of weeks, basically."

Also finding the challenge of acting in a computer game rather odd, Bocher adds: "As an actor I think 'Okay, we've got to keep this interesting, keep it different from the last take'. But the fact is the player will not be seeing [the various takes] all in sequence — they will only see this one or that one."

With that, Carrere and Bocher returned to their make-believe world, looking utterly ridiculous as they continued to shoot invisible aliens and cautiously explore spaceships that don't really exist. Still, they probably get paid a hell of a lot more than you or I, so who are we to criticise?

Daedalus Encounter CD

Have you ever seen anything so beautiful, so stunning, so utterly *perfect*? No, not the bloody game — I'm talking about the nubile Tia Carrere. To quote Wayne and Garth, she really is a babe. From Babe-ylon, probably. But what the hell is she doing in a computer game? A-ha, it seems Virgin have plumped for the oldest trick in the book — using a slinky sex goddess to sell their game.

And blimey, she is sexy. Unlike Chun Li or Virtual Vera, she isn't any old pixelated pouter. No, Tia Carrere is really real, she exists — just not in our lives. Still, we can fantasise while staring as she struts provocatively across the screen. Oh, if only this was Virtual Reality...(Quit day-dreaming! — Dave).

Eh? Oh, right. Back to The Daedalus Encounter, a game cram-packed with full-motion video, awesome presentation and, of course, the little cutie herself, Tia (That's enough! — Dave). Actually, Daedalus isn't a game as such, it's more of an interactive movie (wince). By this I mean playing the 'game' is more like watching a video, with you solving puzzles, blasting aliens and making decisions at key points to determine the outcome of the storyline. Agreed, this sort of thing has been done before — mostly with disastrous results — but then, most other interactive movies haven't been as polished, as atmospheric or even as challenging as Daedalus.

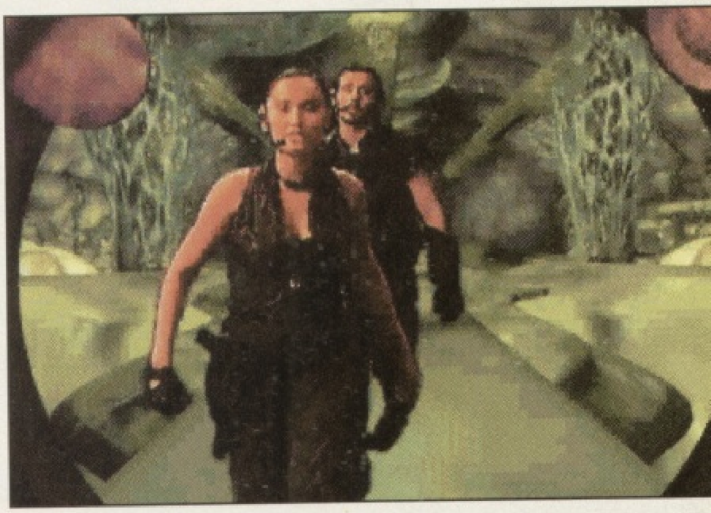
Developed by Mechadeus, who helped pioneer the interactive movie with Critical Path (a game which looked impressive but was, shall we say, a bit *sparse* in terms of things to do), The Daedalus Encounter shows that the team have obviously learned by their past mistakes, as not only are the graphics a big improvement on Critical Path's, they've even decided to slip in a little gameplay too.

The game opens with a movie-style intro in which Lieutenant Ariel Matheson (played by Carrere), accompanied by her co-pilot Zack (played by Christian Bocher) and the ship's gunner, Casey (that's you), is piloting the starship TAS Talon back through space during the final days of the First Interstellar War. Suddenly, the Talon is ambushed by Vakkar fighters that scream out of hyperspace and attack. The battle is frantic but ends abruptly, as one of the Vakkar ships collides with the Talon. While Ari and Zack manage to jettison free, guess whose escape pod is caught in the collision?

Yep, just as luck would have it, you're pod is hit by the Vakkar wreck, almost killing you in the crash. Two months later, you awake from a two month coma, looking *very* different indeed. What happened in the crash? Where are you? And where the hell are your arms and legs?

It seems the crash was almost fatal, although the meditechs did manage to salvage one thing from the wreckage — your brain. Don't worry too much though, because you're now the proud owner of a brand new metal composite body complete with grappling arms, infra-red projectors and even a weapon to defend yourself. Sounds like a bit of a bum deal if you ask me, though, as a laser gun, no matter how big, is no substitute for a man's pride and joy.

Uh-oh, Tia's copped another strop with Zack. What's the poor guy done this time? Did he miss a line? Drop his laser gun by accident, maybe? No, I reckon he was caught staring at Carrere low-cut top again!

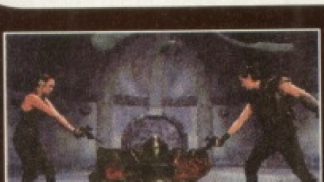


Casey's legs have been replaced by a hover unit that enables him (sorry, it) to move, while the video camera provides a means of seeing (the camera isn't equipped with a zoom lens, however, so don't even *think* about using it to get a close-up of Carrere's cleavage). Using a comlink, Casey can communicate with Ari and Zack, although questions can only be answered with a simple 'Yes' or 'No'.

In fact, the first 'puzzle' in the game is solved in this way. When asked if you can hear Ari, reply 'No' and the game ends rather prematurely. Prove that your system's are on-line by answering 'Yes' and you'll go on to face progressively more difficult challenges throughout the game.

The initial stages are extremely simple to give beginners the chance to familiarise themselves with the game interface. Assuming Casey's point of view, a list of commands clutter the left of the screen while the camera picture appears in the top-right of the screen. All the video footage and puzzles appear in this window, so it's essentially your only link with the outside world.

Although the screen can be kept small for slower 486s, the glorious FMV can be viewed full-screen at the press of a button. To keep the frame rate up you'll obviously need a high spec PC,



Ari: "It's not moving, maybe it's dead"
Zack: "I dunno. I'll shoot it again and find out"

These ugly little bleeders are the Krinn, rabid beasts with an appetite for human flesh.

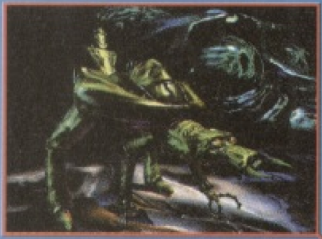
Run away! That's an extremely large alien, and it looks *very* hungry...

Well Tia looks as though she's having a good time. I wonder what Zack is up to?

Click & Play

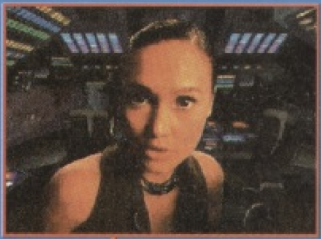
Laser

You just can't talk sense into some people (especially aliens with large fangs), so power-up the laser and let rip.



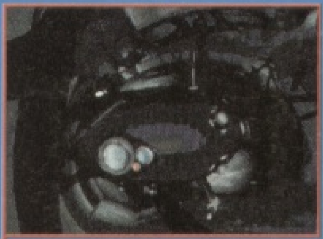
Yes/No

This command is used to solve the first puzzle in the game, and is the only way of communicating with Ari and Zack.



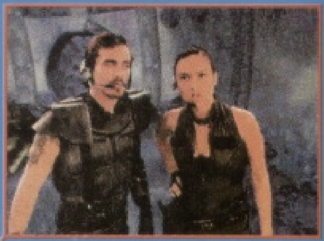
Deploy

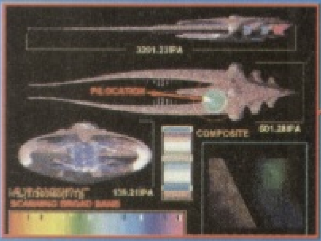
Although Casey is just a brain in a metal box, he can explore the depths of space by sliding into the hover probe and jettisoning out of the airlock.



View Screen

All of the game's gorgeous video footage and taxing puzzle appear in this screen, although powerful PCs can run the FMV full-screen.

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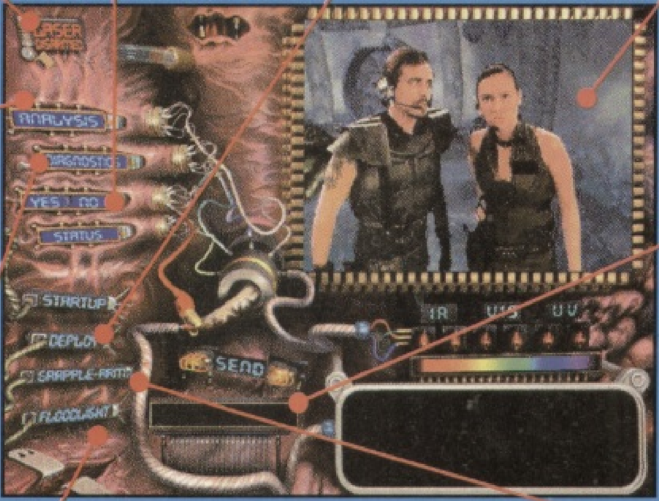
Analysis

Puzzles and other objects can be examined in greater detail by clicking on the Analyse button.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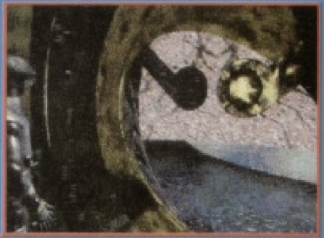
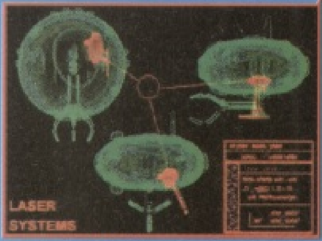


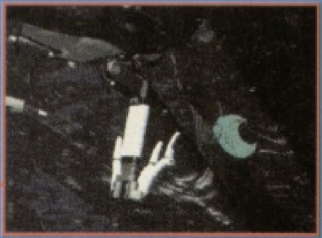
Send Message

Some doors on the great ship Daedalus can only be opened by transmitting light messages that activate the photo-reactive locks.


LASER
SYSTEMS

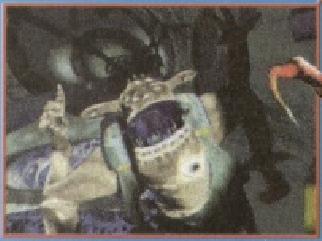
Diagnostics

Feeling under the weather? Run a check on your internal circuit boards by pressing this here icon.



Grappling Arm

It's not easy being a brain with no arms and legs, but the grappling arm enables Casey to pick up and play with anything he discovers.



Floodlight

"I can see clearly now, the light is on..." Press here and all will be revealed.

(Below) This is the good ship Daedalus, the bane of Ari's life. Escape from the god-forsaken craft in time or burn in hell.

(Above Right) Zack does his mean Nicholas Cage impression.
(Right) "Casey, will you stop staring at Ari's cleavage."

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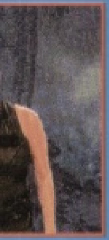
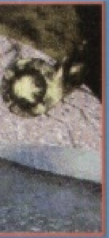
though powerful





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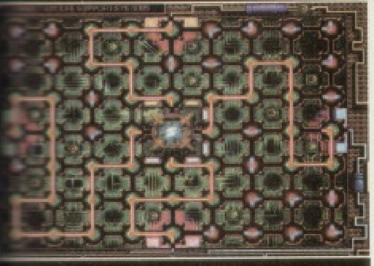
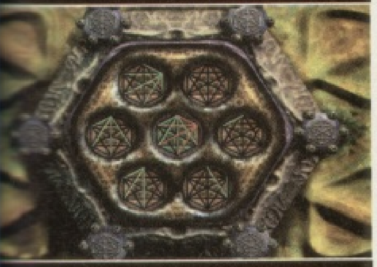
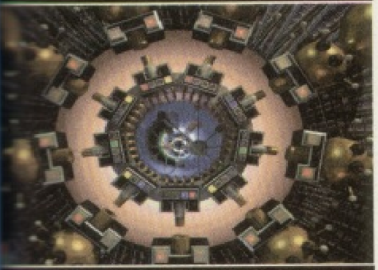


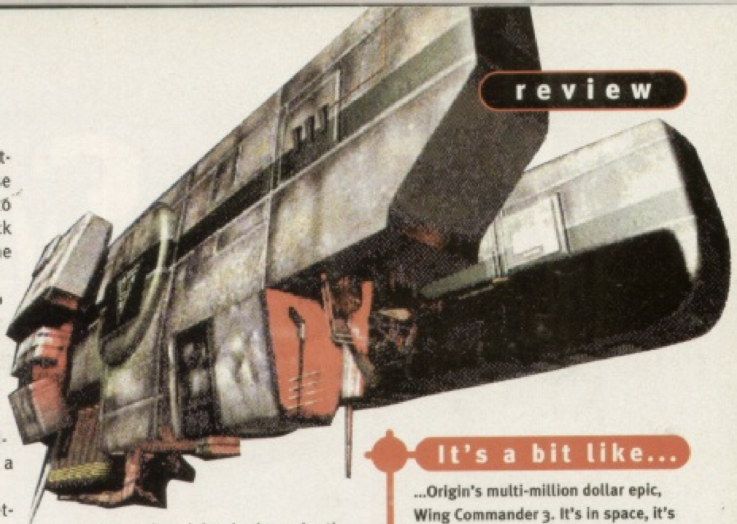
The ship's engines are out, so re-route the circuits to kick in the emergency power.



The yellow door is opened by rotating the shapes and making a star-centred hexagon.



This is *tough*. Press the buttons to link each of the nine switches to the central processing unit.



but the result is absolutely gorgeous, the digitised footage being the best I've seen without the use of an MPEG card.

Most of the commands available are fairly self-explanatory. Click on 'Grapple Arm' and your hydraulic pincers will extend, and likewise your portable flashlight will flick on if you press 'Flashlight'. It's all mouse-driven and is therefore extremely easy to use. Casey also has more complex actions, like 'Analysis' and 'Diagnostics'. When activated the latter runs a check on Casey's internal circuits, while the former is used to examine other objects in greater detail.

Like in most interactive movies you follow pre-set paths as the cinematic sequences unroll, so you're pretty much dragged around the game. It's not *that* linear though, as at key points you can change direction by making decisions, and there are even sections in which you're completely free to explore your immediate environment.

This is done by clicking on the direction arrows on either side of the screen, and any areas of interest are highlighted by a change of cursor. During these sequences you are usually required to find an object or code that Ari and Zack cannot reach, and failing to do so in the set time limit ends the game.

You'll also expire if you take too long solving the puzzles, some of which are easy, others which are bloody impossible! Each of the logic puzzles blocks the way to the next stage of the game, and while you should have no problems understanding them, working out the solutions is a different matter entirely.

By altering the three difficulty settings you can make the puzzles even harder, so thankfully the game has an on-line hint system that gives clues to specific sequences and the game in general. The hints don't actually reveal the complete solution, so while they point you in the right direction, you still have to solve the puzzle yourself.

Logic puzzles aren't the only problems you'll face during The Daedalus Encounter either, and early on in the game a battle against attacking aliens will test your gun-slinging skills. You're main enemy are the Krinn, piranha-like creatures that fly and can gnaw through solid metal, which have infested the derelict alien ship you're exploring in the hope of finding salvageable valuables. When Ari and Zack are attacked, it's up to you to aim your laser and take them out in a simple shoot-'em-up stage. There are mazes to explore and on-the-spot decisions to be made, otherwise Zack and Ari could end up as the Krinn's main course.

At first the aim of the game is unclear. However, after you and your team become spend a few minutes trapped on the seemingly-deserted alien ship, your objective becomes all to apparent. The alien craft is being dragged towards a nearby sun, pulling you, Zack and Ari in with it. If you don't find a way to escape the ship you'll fry, so the three of you set off to explore the vessel in the hope of finding a solution.

The only way of surviving the game is to manually over-ride the craft's navigation computer, and this is done by collecting six orbs which are stored in different areas of the ship. It's therefore pretty obvious that each of these zones must be explored, but in the order the game takes you.

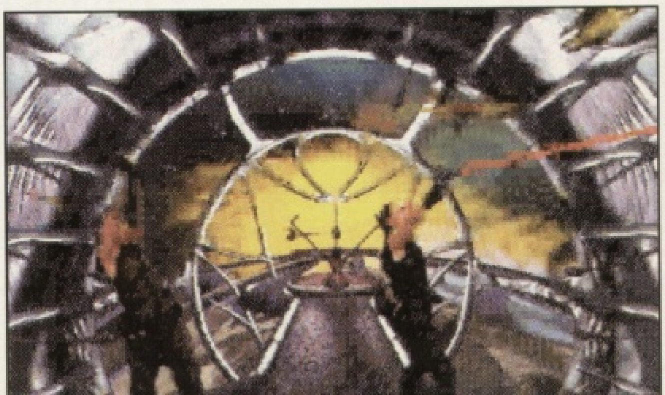
This is one of the few problems of The Daedalus Encounter. While you make decisions which determine the outcome of the game and are even free to explore at some points during the game, some sections automatically drag you along leaving you with no other choice but to sit back and watch, which isn't so bad considering The Daedalus Encounter is a joy to look at.

As I mentioned before, the FMV is some of the best I've seen, not only because of the quality of the digitised footage itself but also because of the high standard of the acting. Both actors play their parts extremely well, and are helped along by a well constructed and often amusing script. The presentation is boosted further still by the powerful musical score, one which matches each scene perfectly and creates both a tense and exciting atmosphere.

The game's cinematic qualities are by far the strongest of its features, and like Wing Commander 3 it's all too easy to become engrossed by the tense and often gripping story.

But I know the question you're all dying to ask — what's it like as a game? Well, it isn't really a game, so it's difficult to say. If you want a decent arcade-style blaster you won't find it here, nor are there any meaty adventure sections to sink your teeth into. Instead The Daedalus Encounter will entertain you in an entirely different way, one in which you don't so much interact but sit back and drool instead. It really is an impressive game — it just won't suit everyone's taste.

On board the Daedalus, Ari and Zack discover the whole ship is infested with flesh-eating Krinn. Within seconds the creatures attack, leaving you no other choice but to pick them off with your laser.



It's a bit like...

...Origin's multi-million dollar epic, Wing Commander 3. It's in space, it's got a couple of (semi) famous stars in playing the lead roles and there's a bunch blood-thirsty critters chasing after you. The similarities end about there though - WC3 is a space sim while The Daedalus Encounter is one of those interactive movie thangs.

THE DAEDALUS ENCOUNTER^{CD}

VIRGIN/MECHADEUS

(0181) 960 2255

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 486, SVGA, 8Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive, 4Mb of hard disk space, Windows 3.1 and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

All Windows-compatible soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Features some of the best FMV without the use of an MPEG card.
- A gripping, often amusing script that is acted out superbly.
- The awesome graphics are matched by a powerful, atmospheric musical score.
- Some of the puzzles are extremely challenging.

...AND THE BAD

- Like most games of this type, it's not all that interactive.
- Look at the minimum specs — forget a DX33, a 66MHz 486 is more like it.
- Some of the puzzles are perhaps too challenging.

Overall

85%

High Seas Trader^CD

Alex Simmons enjoys life on the ocean wave with Impressions' wet 'n' soggy sea-faring strategy game.

Impressions has a bit of a thing about making money: in Airbucks you started off with one plane and had to build up a Freddie Laker-style empire, while in Detroit you began with the one motor design and had Henry Ford for a role-model. And now comes another take on the old 'rags to riches' story in the form of a 17th Century merchant trading game.

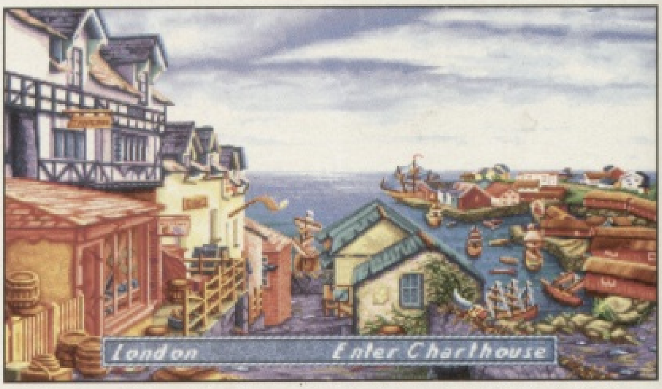
To call HST a business sim may make it sound a bit dry, but that's effectively what it is, despite the odd bout of piracy and combat. In fact, it's rather more colourful than it's predecessors, and it's also better than the game which is its obvious inspiration, The Patrician.

You start off in the usual way, with one ship in your European home port. You fill your hold with whatever's cheap, then saunter off to the foreign clime of your choice, flog the lot for a healthy profit and stock up with the local equivalent of this week's special offer. You have to pay for a crew, soldiers and cannon to protect your vessel, and provisions. When hostile ships heave into view you'll have to be ready to protect your investment, but essentially the name of the game is cash.

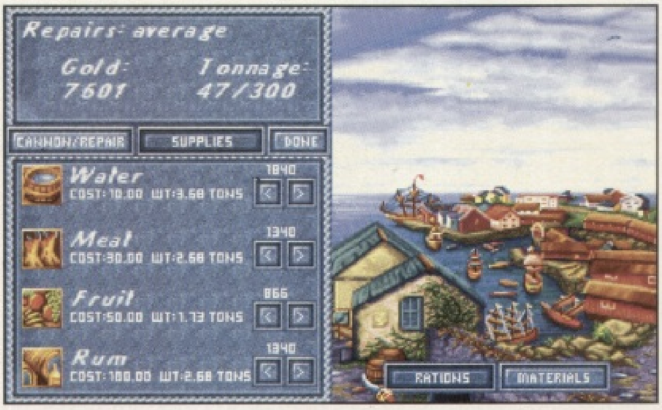
The big improvement HST offers over The Patrician is charts. The world is divided into sectors, and before you can sail to them you'll need to purchase a map. This furnishes you not only with sailing instructions but also with the buy/sell prices for all ports in the area. This does away with the most frustrating part of The Patrician, namely all that tedious economic note-taking.

The combat's better in this game too (not that difficult), though frankly it's still not much good. Nor are the sailing around bits, and I'm not sure I see the point of them. Probably the designers are hoping to spice up what is essentially a game about profit-and-loss ledgers, but the effect is to make the whole thing even more long-winded.

There is a huge amount of gameplay on offer here, but as your empire expands it does get very repetitive. The ultimate aims are a little fuzzy too – just accumulating an ever-bigger stash becomes boring. High Seas Trader is a well-designed game, and I enjoyed playing it, but it hasn't got quite enough fluency or style to get its hooks into me. If you want a business/empire-building game, in my view the best of the lot is still Railroad Tycoon, even after all these years.



This is London – not that you'd know it, because it looks just like anywhere else. Click on the various buildings – tavern, market, bank, etc – and you'll be taken inside.



Repairs: average

Gold: 7601

Tonnage: 47/300

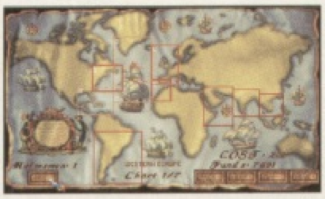
Water 1840
COST: 10.00 WT: 3.68 TONS

Meat 1340
COST: 30.00 WT: 2.68 TONS

Fruit 866
COST: 50.00 WT: 1.73 TONS

Rum 1340
COST: 100.00 WT: 2.68 TONS

Before you sail off don't forget to stock up with provisions. Run out of the bare essentials in mid-voyage and you could have a mutiny on your hands.



Before you can explore the brave new world, you'll need to buy charts to navigate your way around.

HIGH SEAS TRADER^CD

IMPRESSIONS/IN-HOUSE

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MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Roland, Pro Audio Spectrum and Gravis UltraSound soundcards.

THE GOOD...

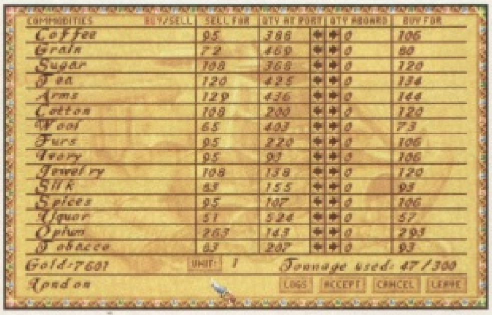
- Tons of gameplay.
- Nice 17th Century period flavour.

...AND THE BAD

- Lacks sufficient variety.
- Not enough action.

Overall

73%

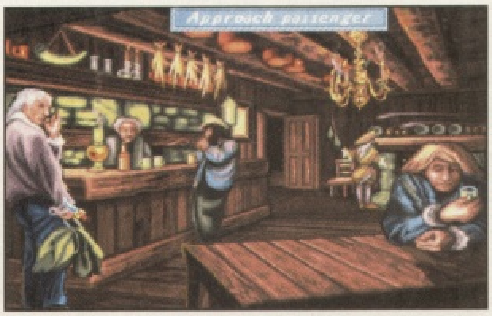


COMMODITIES	BUY/SELL	SELL FOR	QTY AT PORT	QTY ABOARD	BUY FOR
Coffee	◆ ◆	95	386	0	106
Grain	◆ ◆	72	469	0	80
Sugar	◆ ◆	108	368	0	120
Tea	◆ ◆	120	425	0	134
Arms	◆ ◆	129	436	0	144
Cotton	◆ ◆	108	200	0	120
Wool	◆ ◆	65	403	0	73
Furs	◆ ◆	95	220	0	106
Ivory	◆ ◆	95	93	0	106
Jewelry	◆ ◆	108	138	0	120
Silk	◆ ◆	83	155	0	93
Spices	◆ ◆	95	107	0	106
Liquor	◆ ◆	51	524	0	57
Opium	◆ ◆	263	143	0	293
Tobacco	◆ ◆	83	207	0	93

Gold: 7601   UNIT: 1   Tonnage used: 47/300

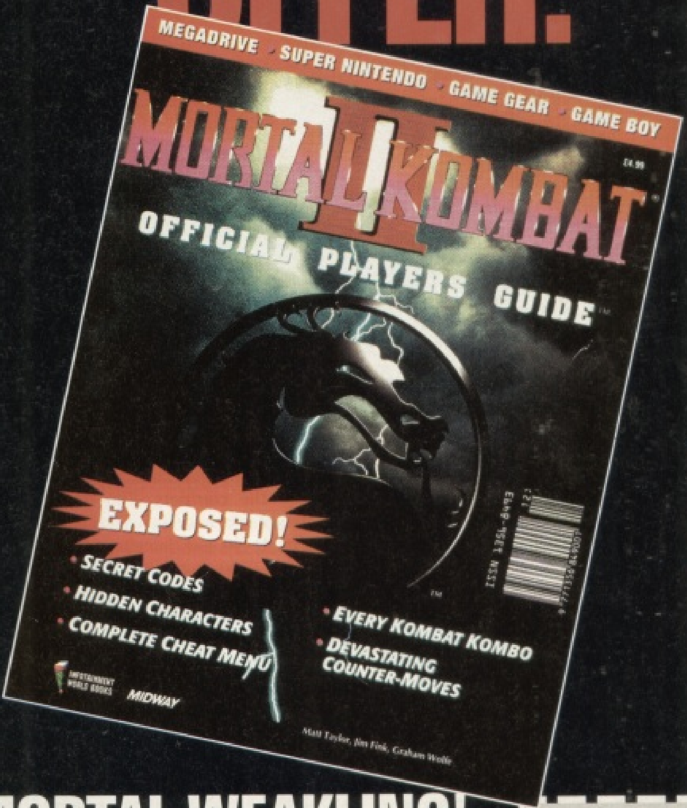
London

No, this isn't an extract from a 17t Century accounting manual, it's actually the point of the game. Mouse click on commodities to buy and sell. View the logs button at the bottom to check the prices of commodities worldwide.



This is the tavern, where a lot of shady characters hang out. There are always sailors and soldiers looking for hire, and sometimes there's a potential passenger who'll offer you a deal for his passage.

AN UNBEATABLE OFFER.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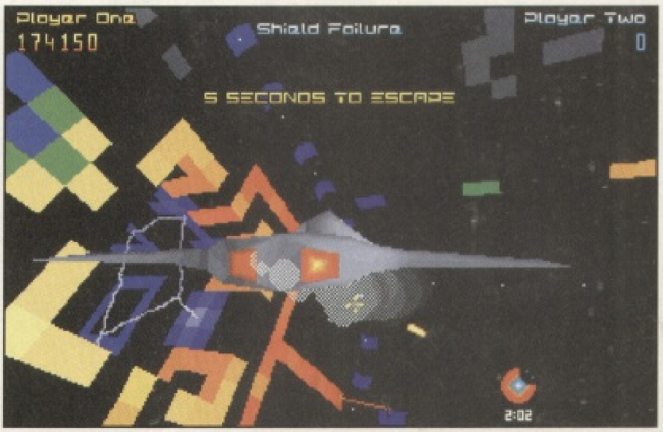
review

Pyrotechnica CD

Wearing his VR headset, Alex Simmons entered Cyberspace for Psygnosis' far-out blast-'em-up.

Pyrotechnica is a freaky game. It's as straightforward as Doom and is akin in many ways to Descent, but the similarities end there. Imagine flying through Cyberspace after a heavy night guzzling super-strength lager down the pub, dogfighting neon-lit enemy fighters inside kaleidoscope-coloured corridors that branch off in every direction. This is about as close as you'll get to the excellent Pyrotechnica.



Like Descent *et al*, Pyrotechnica has its fair share of external views which, although they look very nice, are actually pretty useless when it comes to dogfighting the Adherents.

As you can see, the levels get more complex as the game progress, although visually little changes.

Even the storyline is weird — some bizarre guff about a do-or-die mission against a mysterious enemy called the Adherents — but who needs to know what the game is about as long as it's good, right? I guess so, because I think Pyrotechnica is immensely enjoyable — even though I still don't exactly know *why* the hell I was flying along brightly-patterned corridors in a tiny spaceship called the Pyrodactyl.

So while the story behind the game is fairly irrelevant, the mission objectives aren't. Like Descent, there are specific goals that must be achieved to progress through the game. True, many of these are completed by flying manically with laser cannons on auto-fire, but at least there's *some* structure to the gameplay.

The basic aim of the game is to survive the Adherent onslaught, evading their missile defence systems and eliminating the enemy craft that patrol the corridors. Controlling the Pyrodactyl using a combination of joystick and keyboard commands, the ship is equipped with the usual array of cockpit instruments, including a short-range scanner and various control panels that detail the status of your weapon systems and so on.

Speaking of weapons, the Pyrodactyl is kitted out with the latest military hardware, and boasts three different laser cannons as well as a selection of rockets, grenades, mines and missiles! The fire-and-forget missiles home in on their target, making them the most effective weapon in your arsenal. They're in short supply though, so you'll have to rely on the rechargeable laser cannons for most of the game.

The light laser is relatively weak but is economical in terms of draining your engines, while the heavy laser is the exact opposite — power-hungry but extremely powerful. The cannon is a happy medium of the two, it's rapid-firing capabilities making it an excellent choice for dogfighting the Adherents.

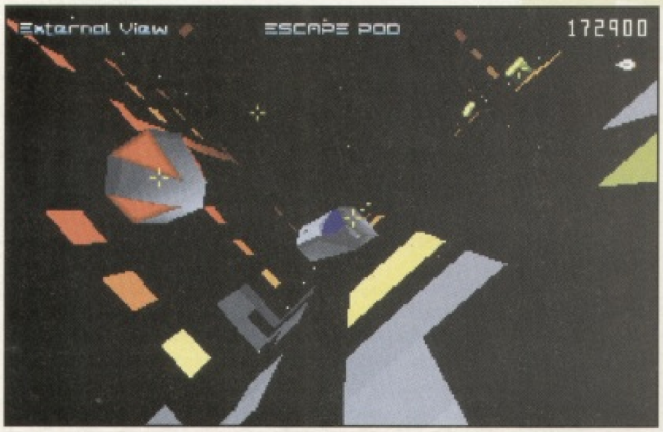
Even though your ship is ably equipped to do battle with the all-powerful, its weapon line-up is still pathetic in comparison to the Adherent ordnance you'll face throughout the game. They too have high-powered lasers and homing missiles, launched from turrets that line the corridors. The fragile Pyrodactyl can only sustain a few direct hits from these gun installations, so you'll have to keep moving to survive more than a few minutes.

The ship also equipped with a couple of defence counter-measures, like flares to attract incoming infra-red missiles and chaff that should hopefully prevent enemy radar-guided rockets from striking home. Again, these are in strictly limited supply, so only use them in dire emergencies.

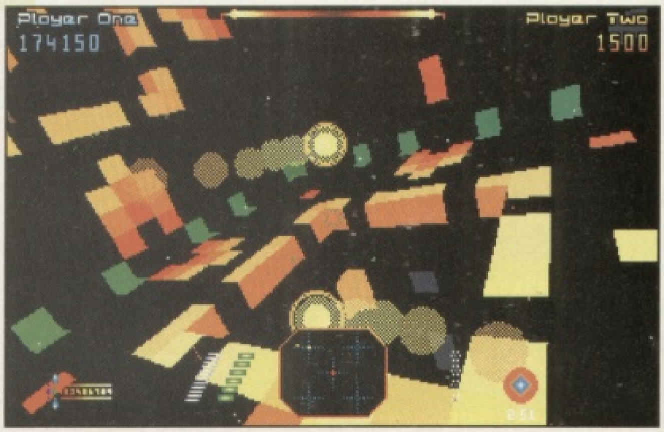
The Pyrodactyl's weapons systems can be boosted during the game by flying through coloured portals. Heavily guarded by Adherent defence installations, the red portal increases the ship's weapons' rate-of-fire by five and drastically reduces the recharge time, while the green portals boost shield strength and also replace any weapon systems that have been previously lost in combat. Finally there's the blue portal which, while not directly affecting your ship in any way, multiplies your score by five. Unfortunately these portals can only be used once each and their effects only last for a few seconds.

Manage to survive the initial Adherent attacks and the secondary objectives of each mission will become apparent — rescue the fellow Terran pilots who have been captured and are encapsulated inside powerful force-fields. Destroying the field generator releases the wingmen, who then join you in your battle against the Adherents. Up to four wingmen will accompany you at any one time, staying by your side through thick and thin.

To complete a level you must first find the exit, the location of which is



When the Pyrodactyl is destroyed you have the opportunity to continue the battle in the escape pod. The pod is agile but poorly armoured, and is equipped with lasers but doesn't carry missiles or rockets.



Flares prove invaluable when engaging missile-firing defence turrets as they draw fire away from the Pyrodactyl. Chaff is also available, but is only effective against radar-guided missiles.

CD

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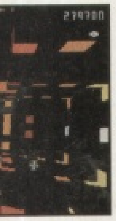

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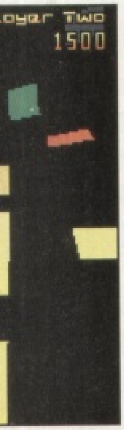

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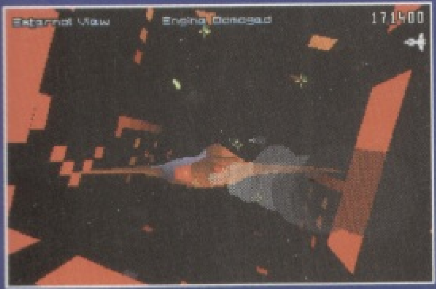
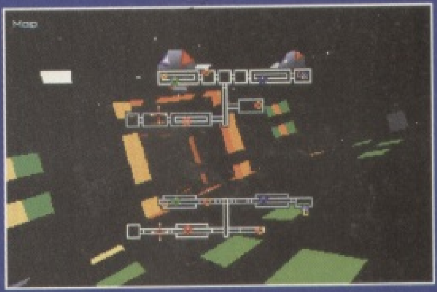
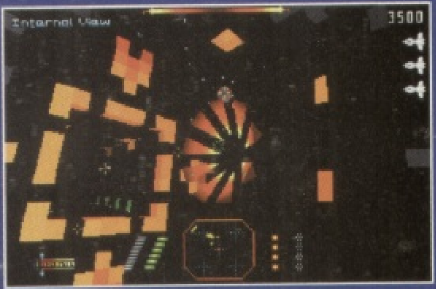
Thank-you For Flying Pyrotechnica



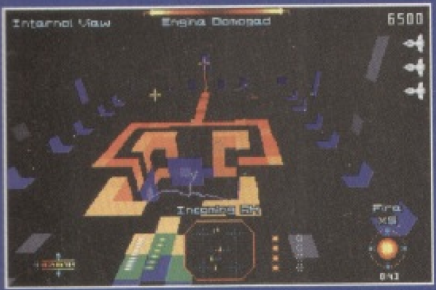
"Welcome to Pyrotechnica Airways. Today we will be flying in a Pyrodactyl-class light fighter, our journey taking us into Silicon Valley and on to our destination, Cyberspace..."



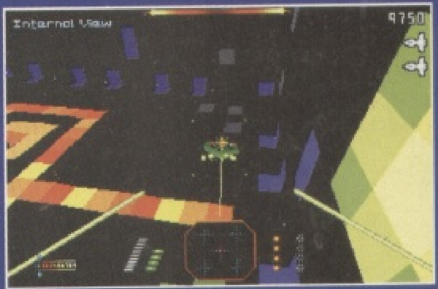
"...Please feel free to view the onboard computer at any time. This details our current location in the Red Star complex, as well as any landmarks and areas of interest."



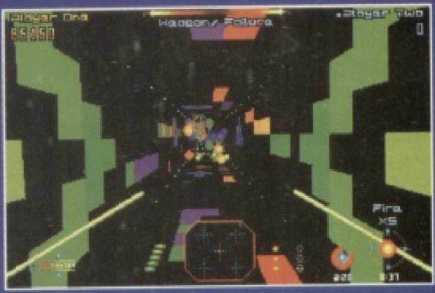
"On your right you'll see dazzling display of bright neon lights, while to the front is one of the scarce red portal. When our pilot flies through the circle notice the substantial increase in firepower."



"Ladies and gentlemen, if you would please be kind enough to extinquish your cigarettes and fasten all seatbelts, we have now located the power generator and are about to make the final approach..."



"At the moment we are experiencing a little turbulence, but please remain in your seats and stay calm. This should die down when the forcefield generator finally explodes."



"Please stay seated until the bonus balls have been wiped out. The ship will shortly be arriving at our destination. We hope you've had a pleasant journey and would like to thank you for flying Pyrotechnica."

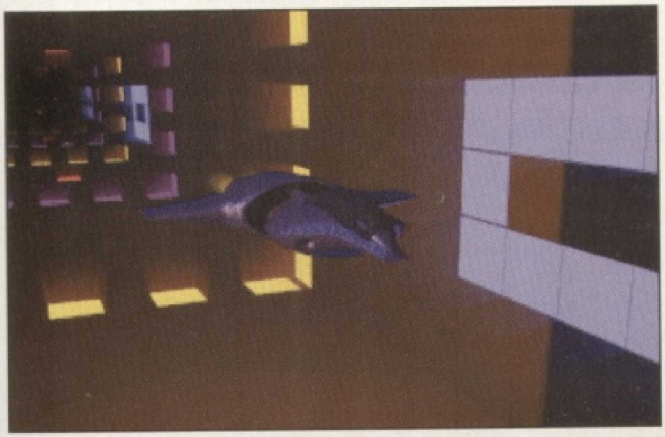
detailed on the in-game map. Rather than mapping out your location in 3D like Descent, the map is a flat representation of the Adherent installation and is therefore quite difficult to follow. Descent's excellent automap facility is much easier to use, and in my opinion would have made the task of negotiating the complex maze-like tunnels much less stressful.

Once the exit has been found, the forcefield protecting the tunnel must be destroyed, again by concentrating fire on the generator. With the generator destroyed and the forcefield lowered, the level is completed simply by flying down the exit. Bonus points are awarded depending on your performance, taking into account the devastation caused on the Adherent army and the number of wingmen rescued.

The exit leads to a bonus stage, a long tunnel filled with coloured orbs which split when shot. Points are notched up by shooting the balls, and also for completing the bonus run and entering the next stage, of which there are loads. The levels throughout the entire game look fairly similar to the next, consisting of dark chambers highlighted by bright lights and patterns on the walls.

Surprisingly these graphics work extremely well, and are a welcome change from the common texture-mapped graphics of Descent *et al.* What's more, because the graphics aren't that complex, Pyrotechnica moves fairly smoothly on lower spec machines too, so you won't need a top-end Pentium for the game to run perfectly — a decent 33MHz 486 should easily suffice.

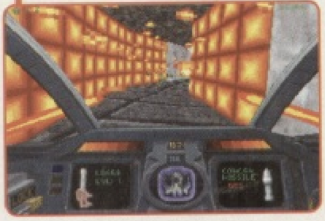
As well as being tremendously enjoyable to play, Pyrotechnica is also refreshingly unique. While it may have borrowed a few ideas from Descent, it is different enough to ensure it's more than just a substandard clone. It's an exhilarating blast that is both extremely challenging and amazingly addictive, and while it's not the most complex of games (but then again, neither was Doom), if you want a classy shoot-'em-up to pass a few hours, you could do a lot worst than Pyrotechnica.



In all honesty, the cutscenes in Pyrotechnica aren't particularly impressive, and as you can probably see they're particularly grainy. Still, the gameplay is top-notch...

It's a bit like...

...Interplay's Descent, the twisting, turning Doom-alike classic that added another dimension to the sea of 3D blasters that swamped the PC. Set in sprawling underground mining complexes, Descent combines gripping gameplay with slick texture-mapped graphics, although you'll needs a decent machine (66MHz DX2) to get things running smoothly.



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MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 486, VGA, 4Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive and 25Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Roland and Gravid UltraSound soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Offers a challenging, frantic blast.
- Looks refreshingly different from the usual 3D shoot-'em-ups.
- Simple, yet very addictive.

...AND THE BAD

- I suppose some would say Pyrotechnica looks a bit bland.

Overall

84%

David Upchurch, SimCity-building vet, tries his hand at Maxis' 'SimCity meets Reach For The Sky'...

SimTower

MAXIS
SIMTOWER
SPACE AVAILABLE! LEASE
MAXIS CONSTRUCTION COMPANY

In Maxis's excellent and best-selling SimCity games, you had to create a city on a piece of terrain, then fill it with shops and restaurants and theatres and places for people to live. You had to make it profitable and also a pleasant place for your little Sim people to live in. In SimTower you have to do the same thing — only upwards. That's it. Will this do? Thought not.

Okay, in SimTower you are in charge of building and maintaining a tower block of up to 99 storeys and a further 10 underground, which — rather unusually, surely? — has not only offices and flats but also shops, cafes, hotels and all sorts of other things in it too. Your job is to build these units strategically, so that they attract customers, tenants and (eventually) lots of money.

You also have to ensure that the quality of life for the people who visit and inhabit your tower is maintained. This is measured by their stress levels: you can see all your Sims (inhabitants) on-screen, and when they turn pink they're stressed out. If they turn red, they're having a full-scale panic attack.

Most of these bouts of hysteria occur when they're waiting for lifts to take them from one floor to another. Installing enough lifts and putting them in the right place is probably the single most important factor in SimTower; if you can't transport your Sims quickly and comfortably they'll all walk out on you.

So what makes SimTower different to SimCity? Well, a variety of things...

(1) It doesn't look like SimCity, for a kick-off. In SimTower you have a 2D cutaway view of your tower, as opposed to the isometric-3D layout of SimCity, and the graphics are noticeably different, although still marvels of miniaturisation.

(2) Your tower is rated from one to five stars; the more stars you have, the more sophisticated the facilities available to build. You start off with a measly single star, which means you can build your tower's lobby — the essential starting off point — and add some fast food outlets and some condominiums, or apartments, and offices.

Once you have 300 inhabitants you move up to two stars, and add some hotel rooms with housekeeping facilities, and a security centre complete with men in uniform. One thousand Sims and you get three stars. Restaurants, shops, lavish hotel suites, pubs, a medical centre, an express elevator which only stops once every 15 floors, a cinema, function room, recycling centre and underground car parking are all yours once you have three stars. At four stars, you can build a metro station for your tower and with five stars you can top out the roof with a cathedral dome, so long as you have your full complement of 99 floors.

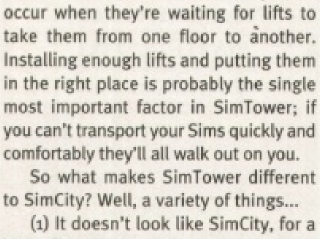
(3) Your Sims are real people! Every single one of your inhabitants is animated and leads a rich and rewarding life, getting up in the morning, making the beds, travelling to work, going to the shops and so on, until they go back to bed again. You can also spy on them by zooming in on a Sim that takes your fancy, giving them a name and then keeping track of their movements. Your named Sim will be picked out in blue and you can follow them around.

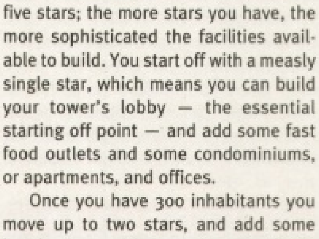
(4) There's no fiddling around with power plants which blow up and messy cables. Full and reliable connection to the national grid is automatic.

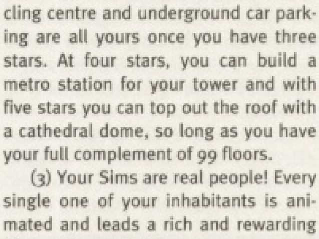
(5) SimTower has weather. It rains in winter, and when it rains you don't get so many visitors from outside the tower, so it affects trade in your shops and restaurants.

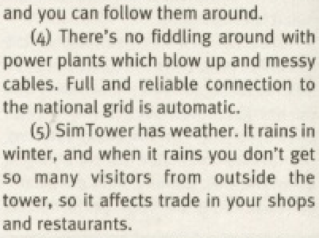
(7) Disasters aren't called disasters, but 'events'. These include the arrival of a VIP to stay in one of your hotel suites. If the VIP complains during his visit, you

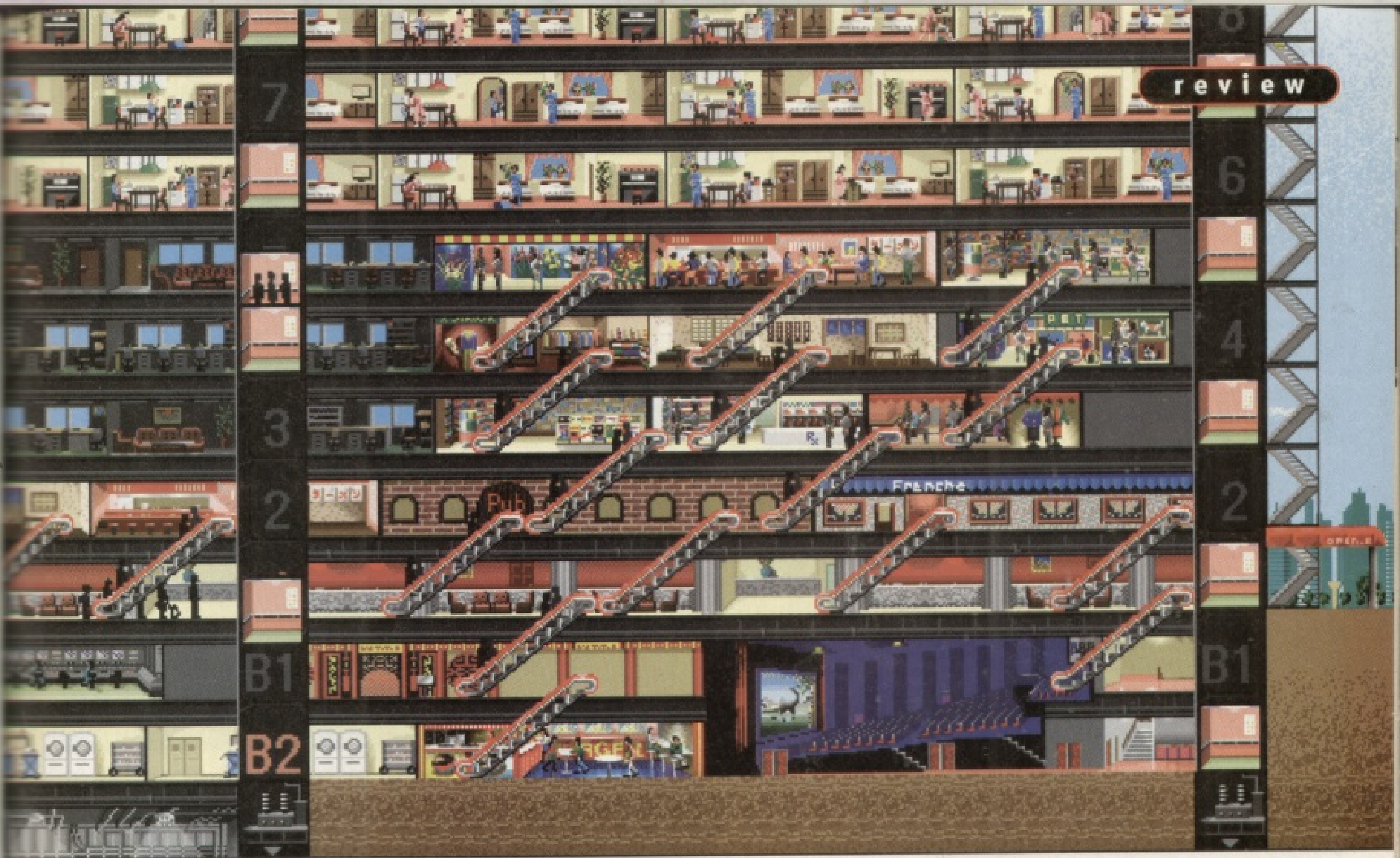
Laying *The Foundations*


The first thing your tower needs is a lobby. You can make this as wide as you like, but to start with choose a manageable size so that you can build on top of it without spending too much money.


Putting leisure facilities near the lobby means that people from outside can reach them easily. Since fast food outlets are the only thing currently available, a storey of takeaways is called for.


Now you have to give the Sims a way to reach their grub. You can place lifts over the top of the lobby and your shops; they are notionally in front of them rather than going straight through the middle.


Pull the lift up one more storey with the finger icon, and you have an excellent base for a floor of offices. You want to get the population up as quickly as possible to move on to the next star rating.



It's a full house at the movie theatre where 'Dino Wars' is showing. Don't leave the same films running for year after year, though, or the punters will stay away. First-run releases attract the best attendances.

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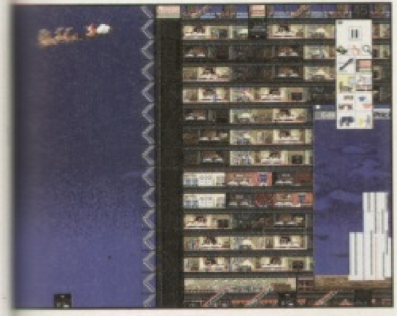
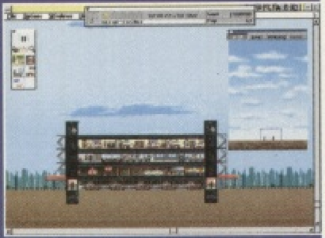


Santa and his reindeer bring some seasonal goodwill to the tower when they fly past at Christmas.

won't be able to move up to the next star rating until he's returned and had a comfortable stay. You also need to make sure that you have enough housekeepers cleaning the hotel rooms, or else you will be overrun by cockroaches. Other hazards are the outbreak of fire and a terrorist planting a bomb.

There are also a couple of good events: Santa Claus flies across every Christmas (though to no effect), and if you build below ground, you will more than likely unearth some buried treasure which will put money in the bank.



Add a third floor of apartments and now your Sims can work, rest and play all under one roof. Once the conditions are attractive, you'll find that they'll move in very quickly.

Okay, on the other hand, what makes SimTower similar to SimCity? Again, there are several things:

(1) You can think of the different types of facility (offices, shops, hotels) as being like zones, and you should try to keep each floor to just one type, else the Sims will complain. Noise travels across, apparently, if not up and down.

(2) Money. There's so much you want to do and you've got your tower layout planned just-so — now if only you had the cash. Just as leaving SimCity to run on its own for a few hours to let the dosh pile up always helped things along, so in SimTower there are times when it's best just to sit and wait, check out a few shops, follow a couple of Sims around and wait for few days or even weeks to pass before you splash out on a building spree.

(3) The strategy. If you apply sound SimCity principles to SimTower, you won't go far wrong. Start small and expand slowly. Only add the pricey things when Sims demand them.

Although initially created outside Maxis by a Japanese company called OpenBook, SimTower is designed to slip easily into the Sim series. I reckon it won't be long before you can swoop low over your Sim City into your big office block and find yourself in SimTower.

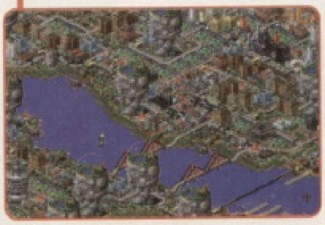
There are several good points about this: firstly, there was nothing much wrong with SimCity in the first place, and this is an interesting variant on the theme. And secondly, having the large, animated Sims really does make the game feel different — you really start to care about the little guys.

There's less emphasis on disasters and more on the economic and ergonomic factors which may or may not appeal to you — at least your prime real estate isn't going to get wiped out by an earthquake just as you've spent a fortune building it up.

On the other hand, the only people who will find this game difficult are those who've never played SimCity, and there aren't many people left who fit that description.

It's a bit like...

...SimCity 2000. SimCity 2000 has similar principles but is designed to a broader scale, since you have the infrastructure of an entire city to manage. Create the right conditions and the Sims will move in and make your city prosperous. Get your town planning wrong and you'll be left with an urban slum. Something of a milestone in computer games.



SIM TOWER

Maxis/OpenBook

(0171) 490 2333

£39.95 Out Now

MINIMUM **SPEC**

25MHz 486, SVGA, 4Mb RAM, 15Mb of hard disk space, Windows 3.1 and mouse.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

All Windows-compatible soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- It's easy to get going quickly, so you feel you're getting somewhere.
- There are some great sound effects of the tower coming to life — it's all very atmospheric.
- It's got replay value — even after developing a mega-monster tower, there's still satisfaction from going back and trying out a different layout.

...AND THE BAD

- May be a bit too easy for hardened SimCity pros.
- Manually moving around the skyscraper gets more unwieldy the bigger the tower gets.

Overall

84%

review

Strategy maestro Impressions turns its hand to soccer manager sims — and Alex Simmons is impressed.

Ultimate Soccer Manager

Many people in the PC GAMES office believe that this season's championship battle is over, and that only one team can win the race for title. I am, of course, referring to the title of 'Top Footy Management Sim Of 1995'. I admit that Gremlin's Premier Manager 3 has swept away all the competition so far this season, but now here's the acid test: how does it cope against USM?

"What the hell is USM?" you ask. Well, it stands for Ultimate Soccer Manager, and it also just happens to be one of the most enjoyable footy sims that I've played in a long time. I like a game with options and this one has quite a few interesting ones. For example, before you start your first game, the computer asks you if you would like the rigging option on or off. If you take advantage of this option, you can then bribe opposing teams to let you win, place bets on your own team losing, or there is always the good old transfer market bung! Another good feature is the option to take full control of the club, handling everything from kit sponsorship to the price of the tea in the cafe.

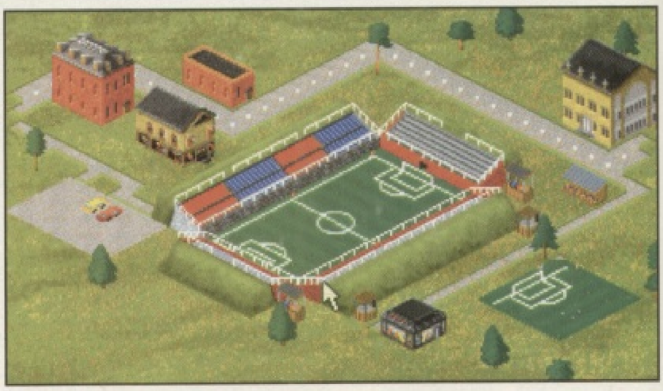
Once you have made your relevant choices, you then can select your team. If you select a Premiership side, you have a large stadium and loads of fans willing to shell out for merchandising. But the further down the leagues you go, the harder it gets until you reach the conference and you have one stand, a few grassy banks and hardly any fans.

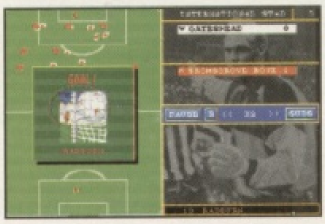
Of course, you can't run a football team without the aid of lots of lovely cash. And this is where USM scores, as you can select the amount of money you start off with. The lowest amount is £250,000 and the largest amount is £5,000,000. Okay, so there's always the temptation to select Liverpool and five million, but that means there's little challenge as you can buy any player you want. True soccer fans will find the real challenge in starting in the conference with next-to-no money. That is a true test of managerial skills.

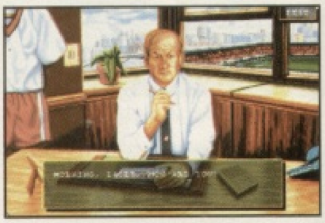
Of course, it's not just about buying players and picking a team, there are also contract demands that have to be met, coaches that have to be employed to improve player skills, and on-field tactics that have to be sorted out. Certain chores, such as sponsorship and advertising, can be left in the hands of your assistant manager. He will also provide advice on formations and team selection. He can be useful, but it's best to make your own mistakes and learn from them.

So, how does USM compare to PM3? Very well indeed, is the answer. As most of the icons are quite clear, you can get into the game with little or no fuss. On the harder skill settings the game represents quite a challenge, plus it gives you the option to mess around if you want some easy glory.

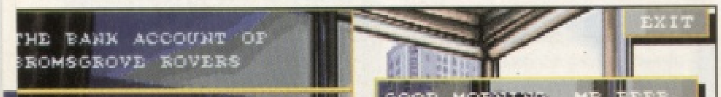
On the downside, the match graphics are quite poor, the music is very irritating and seems out of place in a soccer sim, and, for some reason, whenever you are awarded a penalty, nine times out of ten the keeper saves it! If USM had included an option to control the players in the matches it might just have been one of the best games ever. As it is, it's a fun and very playable management sim.







(Top) Although you could hardly class Ultimate Soccer Manager as a 'looker', its graphics are superior to those in most other soccer sims. (Above) Yum — all the excitement of the big match in your own home!



HE BANK ACCOUNT OF
ROMSGROVE ROVERS

ALANCE 566
VERDRAFT IMIT 0
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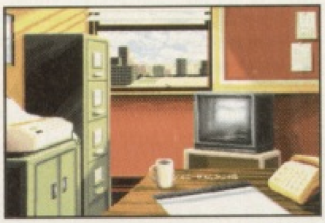
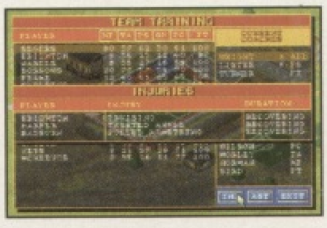
EPOSIT CCOUNT 2,028,154

GOOD MORNING, MR BEER,
WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?

Look! It's the late Dennis Potter in his first game role — as a bank manager! A fitting and worthy tribute to one of the country's greatest playwrights, I think you'll agree.





Phew! If you're a fan of stats galore, then Ultimate Soccer Manager will be just your cup of tea.

ULTIMATE SOCCER MANAGER

IMPRESSIONS/IN-HOUSE
(0171) 351 2133
£34.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 8Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Extremely easy to get into.
- Enough player and team data to keep even Statto happy.
- The 'Bung' option is a welcome — and very amusing — addition!

...AND THE BAD

- The in-game music is very irritating.
- Dire match graphics — as always in footy management sims.
- It's far too easy to win if you play with a Premiership side.

Overall

89%

Virtua Chess^CD

David Upchurch goes for Check-Mate with Titus' definitive chess simulation.

Unless you're a 'chess nut', it's hard to get truly excited by the release of yet another chess sim. After all, at the end of the day chess is just... well, chess, basically. But Virtua Chess does offer several features that separates it from the also-rans, and arguably make it the best chess sim on the market.

For a start, the interface is excellent. Although Virtua Chess runs from DOS (and from CD, intelligently configuring itself to your PC), it uses a Windows-style interface that lets you to have multiple views and info panels on-screen, all of which update simultaneously.

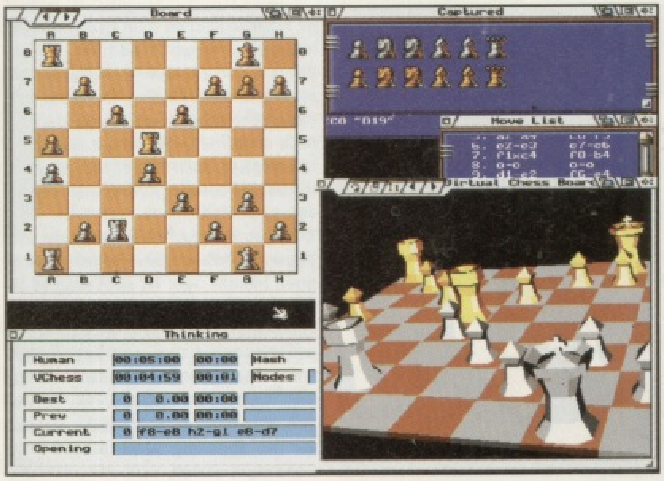
It's pretty too, offering a variety of board representations including a selection of fully-customisable 3D board views. True, it's not quite in the same league as Battlechess or its sequels, but then it's faster and offers a stronger game, and that's what matters at the end of the day.

In fact, that's an understatement, because Virtua Chess plays a superior game to Kaspirov's Gambit and Chessmaster 4000, two benchmark programs in this genre. But novices need not be dismayed because Virtua Chess also offers several difficulty levels, which basically limit the amount of time the program has to think about its moves — the less time it has, the worse it'll play.

There's also a 'beginner' level, where the program will constantly alter its performance to match yours, even making the occasional mistake from time to time. No matter what your level of ability, Virtua Chess offers a strong but not overwhelming challenge.

There's a wealth of other features as well, including a library of classic moves and game openings, an 'Analyse' option that'll solve chess problems for you, the ability to play head-to-head with another human over a network, and so on.

Virtua Chess won't appeal to everyone, and those who just fancy a casual game every now and then may want to opt for something flashier. But anyone with even a passing interest in serious chess, on the other hand, will love it.



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6. e2-e3      e7-e6
7. f1xc4      f8-b4
8. o-o        o-o
9. d1-e2      f6-e4
```

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Human     00:05:00       00:00
VChess    00:04:59       00:01
Best      0     0.00     00:00
Prev      0     0.00     00:00
Current   0 f8-e8 h2-g1 e8-d7
Opening
```

VIRTUA CHESS^CD

TITUS/IN-HOUSE

(0171) 700 2119

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

16MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

All major soundcards (not that it makes much difference to the game).

THE GOOD...

- If you're looking for a serious chess simulation, then this is definitely the one to go for.
- Excellent presentation is matched by a strong game.

...AND THE BAD

- Perhaps not quite 'pretty' enough for the casual player.

Overall

89%

Arc Of Doom^CD

We don't need no edu-cay-shun — at least, not like this, reckons David Upchurch.

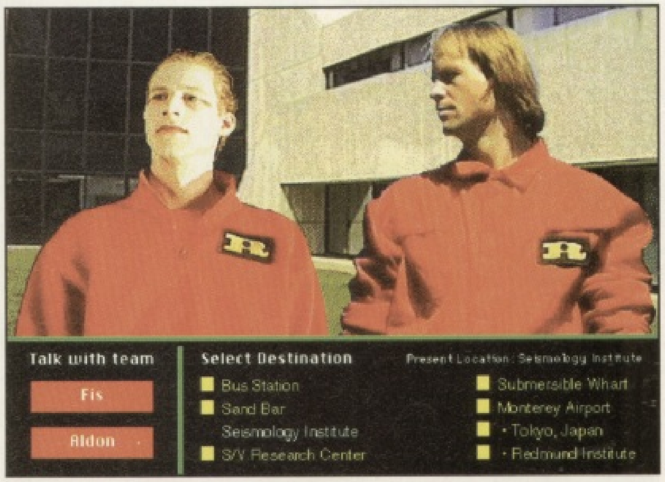
SunStar bills Arc Of Doom as an "Earth-shattering CD-ROM eduventure". You know, it's just as well I don't write these company blurbs, because somehow "Barely-playable rubbish that appears to have been written by a team of untalented gibbons" probably wouldn't please the big bosses at all.

Arc Of Doom is a Windows-based multimedia 'experience', in which the Earth's ecosystem is being rocked by a series of increasingly-violent natural disasters. However, the boffins at the Redmund Institute (home to a team of international trouble-shooters — a bit like the Thunderbirds, but duller) reckon these disasters aren't quite as natural as they seem, and have dispatched Alpha Team to investigate. However, they've mysteriously disappeared and so you, as leader of Beta Team, are sent out to follow their tracks...

What follows is a painfully boring tour of the world, in which you and your fellow team members travel from one location to the next, searching for clues as to Alpha Team's fate and the cause of the disasters. As in most adventures there are puzzles to solve and people to chat to, with the biggest innovation being that you can ask one of your team members to crack a problem if your own brain isn't up to the task.

There are mini arcade shoot-'em-up bits too, but as this is a Windows game they're slow and rather tedious. In fact, the *whole game* is slow and tedious, with the screen taking an age to update as you journey from place to place. Even worse are the lumps of slow, jerky QuickTime For Windows video and the appalling quality of the acting.

I realise Arc Of Doom is aimed at the younger PC gamer, but I think even the most patient and undemanding child would rapidly get fed up with this. The 'educational' stuff is presented so boringly that it's unpalatable, and the game itself is dreary, dull and lifeless. Avoid.



ARC OF DOOM^CD

SUNSTAR/KEYSTONE

(001203) 785 8111

$59.95 OUT NOW (IMPORT)

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, SVGA, 5Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive, Windows 3.1 and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

All Windows-compatible soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Ooh, now I'm struggling...

...AND THE BAD

- Turgid, unexciting gameplay with a woeful lack of tension.
- About as educational as The Terminator.

Overall

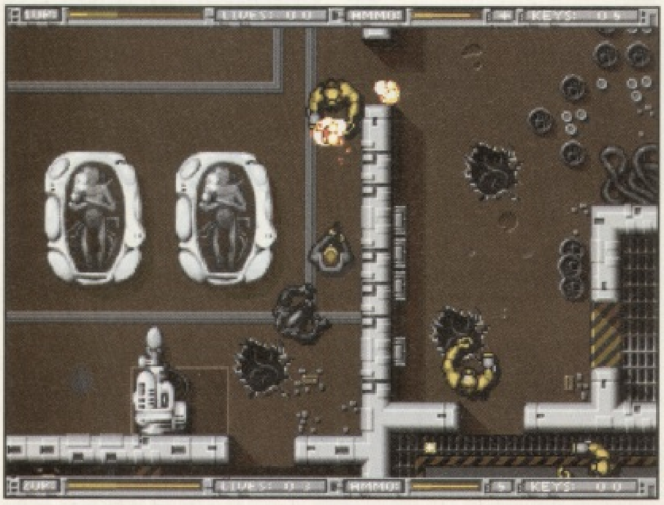
34%

Alien Breed: Tower Assault

Team 17 go hunting bugs — with David Upchurch.

Sorry, but there are no prizes for guessing the monster movie series which inspired the plot of Team 17's Alien Breed: Tower Assault. Apparently contact has been lost with a Military Research Unit at the distant edge of known space and the authorities, who are naturally somewhat concerned, have sent a squad of marines in to investigate.

On their arrival, however, it soon becomes apparent that the base has been over-run by the Alien Breed, a hideous race of insect-like aliens. Worse than that, the Unit's scientists have foolishly left the base's auto-defences on, and the marines' ship is shot down in a hail of laser-fire. Only two survive the onslaught, and set out alone to explore the base, to find the Alien Queen and kill her...



And there are no prizes for guessing the games which influenced AB:TA's programmers either. It's an arcade-style shoot-'em-up, basically, very much in the mould of Gauntlet or The Chaos Engine, in which one or two players navigate a multitude of maze-like levels, shooting baddies and collecting weapon and health upgrades.

AB:TA's gameplay, however, is a little more structured than that featuured in those aforementioned titles. It's not just a case of shooting wildly to stay alive and then finding the level exit (although, to be honest, those are your main concerns) — there are also tasks to complete, such as trapped colonists to rescue, security systems to deactivate and so on.

If you ask me, it's unfortunate that Team 17 didn't release this game two or three months ago. As appealing as its simplistic blast-'em-up action is, the game looks positively archaic compared to what Cryo and Acclaim are doing with their 'official' Aliens tie-ins. Still, AB:TA is a nice enough blaster and, if nothing else, it makes amends for the appalling Alien Breed. Good stuff, overall.

ALIEN BREED: TOWER ASSAULT

TEAM 17/EAST POINT

(01924) 201846

£29.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and 3Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; joypad; Sound Blaster, Pro Audio Spectrum and Gravis UltraSound soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- A slick, playable, all-action shoot-'em-up.

...AND THE BAD

- Not the most original game concept ever devised.
- Even bug-hunting can get a little monotonous eventually.

Overall

83%

Manchester United: The Double

Krisalis helps David Upchurch achieve the double...

Although Manchester United's performance this year hasn't been *quite* so spectacular as it was last, that hasn't stopped Krisalis from releasing yet another footy game based around its lucrative Red Devils licence — Manchester United: The Double.

Actually, I say 'another' but, to be honest, in terms of gameplay there aren't really that many differences between this and Manchester United: Premier League Champions, which was released some six months ago.

The most important difference cosmetically is that the pitch is now viewed in isometric-3D, a bit like FIFA but with teeny-weeny sprites. Although it looks better than MU:PLC's top-down view, I found that it made the game slightly harder to play — it's not so easy to judge passes and such like from this angle, making it that tiny bit tougher to score goals.

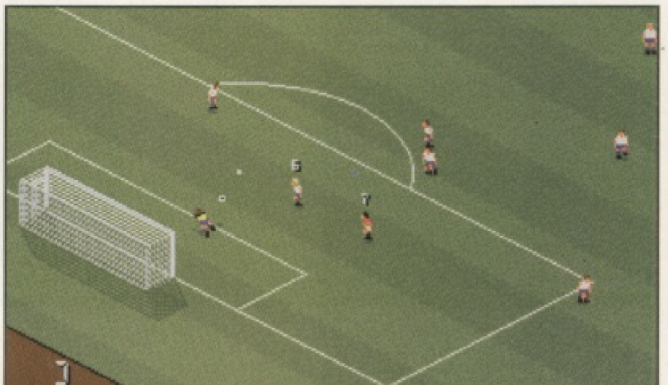
Another new feature is the transfer market, which allows you to buy and sell players on the open market. Apparently this was the feature most often requested by players of MU:PLC, so it should keep them happy if nobody else.

Finally there's the game editor. This hugely-powerful program lets you fiddle with just about every aspect of MU:TD's massive and very up-to-date database. You can change the players' names, their stats, the team line-ups, the leagues... you name it. You can even create your own leagues and populate them with teams of your own devising — although be warned, it takes time to do it properly!

So is Manchester United: The Double just money for old rope? Well, not quite — the additions that Krisalis has made are very welcome. But even so, you can't help feeling a little ripped off. Still, if you're looking for a decent and highly-comprehensive footy game then you could do a lot worse than this.

Manchester United
Old Trafford
TactiGrid
4-4-2
Pre-Match

(Right) Ooh, doesn't it look like EA's FIFA Soccer? Well, a little bit, anyway...



MANCHESTER UNITED: THE DOUBLE

KRISALIS/IN-HOUSE

(01709) 372290

£29.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4.5Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; joypad; Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- A very comprehensive and well-designed footy simulation.

...AND THE BAD

- Lacks that certain 'something' that makes a truly great footy game.
- Plays identically to Man Utd: Premier League Champions.

Overall

77%

The deity known as Alex Simmons fondled his beard, then tried his hand at US Gold's new god game.

Dominus

On paper Dominus sounds very promising. According to US Gold, it's a "fantasy god-style game that uniquely combines combat action with real-time strategy decision-making". They also reckon the game's wealth of 'sophisticated' strategy elements and isometric-3D combat sections make it the largest and most playable game of its kind. If only that were true.

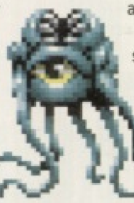
Instead Dominus is a decidedly mediocre release, one which is initially quite intriguing but has little to offer in the long term. The reason for this is that while the game looks quite complex at first, in actual fact it's deceptively simple. The objective of the game is to protect your castle from the neighbouring clans who incessantly raid and pillage your domain. Obviously the more the enemy steal the stronger they become, so it's vitally important to strike back hard and fast.

The easiest way to counter-attack is by raising an army and intercepting their invasion. This is done by consulting your advisors, a group of four grizzly beasts each with hordes of blood-thirsty monsters under their command. Obeying your every order, they'll deploy the creatures to any region within your kingdom. If the enemy is near the army will automatically charge into combat, otherwise the beasts will simply hang around and either wait for the enemy to arrive or to be ordered elsewhere

Combat is fully automated, although you can interact to some extent with the icons that line the right-hand side of the screen. Clicking on the chariot summons the Overlord, a powerful warrior capable of fighting through endless waves of battle axe-fodder. Lose the Overlord and the game will end though, so it's advisable to save him for emergencies.

The magic icon allows you to create one of 70 spells by mixing various ingredients together and consulting the spell book. The effects of spells vary, and are anything from frying the enemy alive to multiplying your troops five times over!

Traps are also used in combat, placed strategically across the battlefield to surprise the enemy. By combining trigger mechanisms and hazards, up to a maximum of a 100 different traps can be built, some affecting single targets, others having an area effect.



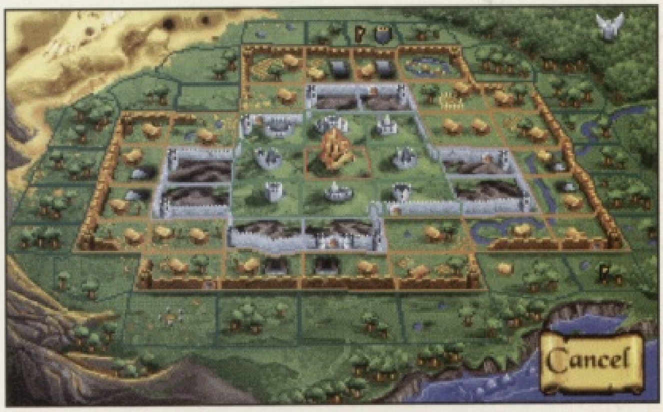
Additionally, extra tough soldiers can be genetically constructed in the monster mixing room, a sacred alter in which hapless beasties are magically joined together in the hope of creating the ultimate four-armed fighting machine. Of course, if the experiment goes wrong you're left with a mutant who's useless at practically everything apart from washing the dishes!

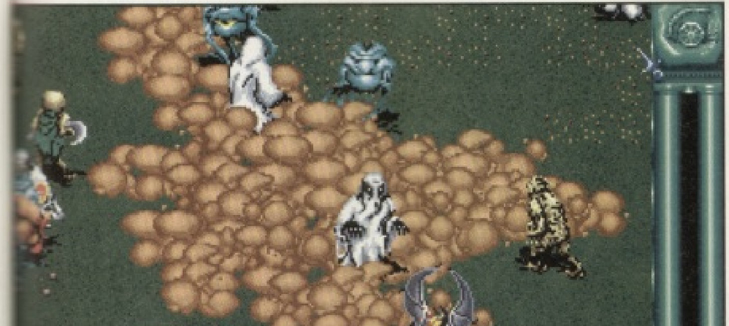
The fight slowly plods along until either the Overlord is killed or the invaders have been pushed back into their own realms, leaving you to restore peace throughout the land and nip down to the local inn for a swift half. That is until the bloody enemy return, and you have to go through the whole caboodle all over again.

This is why Dominus soon becomes tiresome. Having repelled your borders once, it's difficult to build up the enthusiasm to do it all over again. While the graphics are okay, they're not good enough to keep you hanging on to see the next scene. As for the sound... to be honest, I've heard better on the Commodore 64.

Having said that, Dominus isn't entirely bad, honest. It *is* entertaining, if only for a few hours, but then again half a day's orc-bashing for over forty quid doesn't represent particularly good value for money, does it? No, I thought you'd agree.

This your domain. In the centre is the castle you need to protect from the invading hordes, and this is done by positioning troops, setting traps and building defences in the surrounding territories.





That's it, you've had enough, it's time to bring in the big boys. Riding into battle on a chariot pulled by a powerful black Pegasus, the Warlord readies his battle mace and prepareshimself for a bloody war.

DOMINUS

US Gold/Visual Concepts

(0121) 625 3366

£42.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 35Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Roland MT-32 and Sound Canvas soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Creating your own traps, spells and monsters is a laugh.
- Dominus is quite an entertaining strategy game...

...AND THE BAD

- ...But unfortunately it won't keep you interested for more than a few hours.
- Although it looks okay, Dominus runs fairly slowly on even a pretty good 486.

Overall

65%

Alex Simmons goes the distance with Mindscape's bare-knuckle brawler.

Warriors^CD

Hang on, it's not the 1st of April is it? No? Well, it's a bloody miracle then. I mean, *two* decent beat-'em-ups in one month must surely be an Act Of God. First we have GameTek's stunning conversion of Super Street Fighter II Turbo, then Mindscape surprise us with the highly-playable Warriors.

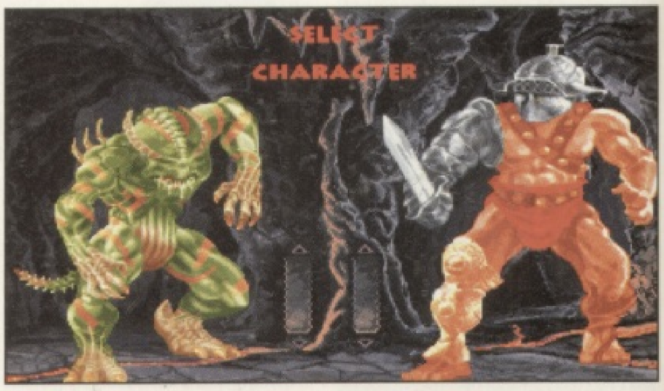
Like SF2 Turbo, Warriors is a fairly bog-standard one-on-one pummel-'em-up for either one or two players. In the solo game the objective is to fight through the underling warriors before reaching the final big baddy, while the two-player mode is just a barbaric fight to the death. Mind you, it's not quite as simple as that, as there's the usual thumb-straining special combos to master as well as a hefty selection of punches, kicks and weapons to play around with.

Choosing one of 10 fighters, it's the remaining 9 warriors who must be defeated before battling the supernatural guy who summoned you to the OtherWorld™ where the game is set. Each character fights on a different backdrop and must be defeated two out of three times to progress to the next, which is all pretty familiar stuff, I'm sure you'll agree. That's because it is — Warriors has very few surprises, although it does have one or two neat features up its sleeves.

For starters, Warriors is one of just a handful of SVGA beat-'em-ups, Rise Of The Robots being the only other that springs to mind (but then it's crap, so it doesn't really count). Another feature that separates Warriors from SFII is that it doesn't use cartoon-style characters, or digitised fighters like Mortal Kombat.

Instead developers Atreid have used a technique called 3D Bio Motion, the result of which makes each fighter move with beautiful fluidity. The characters are made up of dots rather than sprites, but because of this they look a lot less defined than Ryu, Rayden and co. That said, the difference is hardly noticeable when the game actually begins to move, the giant-sized warriors looking great as they brawl across the colourful backdrops.

You can pick from a selection of 10 fighters in the two-player game, including this Predator-type fella whose special move is to blend in with the background. He can also spit green snot at his enemies.

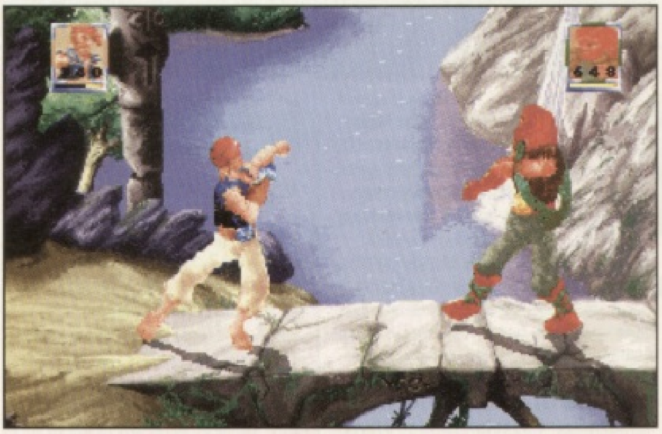


Another of Warriors' unique features is the ability to change the camera angle while fighting, moving from the standard side-on view to one looking slightly down on the fight. Although this is simply a cosmetic nicety, it actually gives the graphics a greater feeling of depth. Also I found it made it slightly easier to time special moves and dodge attacks, which makes the game even more playable.

Although Warriors is generally excellent, one of the few gripes I have with the game is the speed. On a Pentium the game skips along at a sprightly 35 frames a second, while on a DX33 it staggers at a measly ten. The game still plays well, but the animation isn't as glorious or indeed as smooth as it is meant to be.

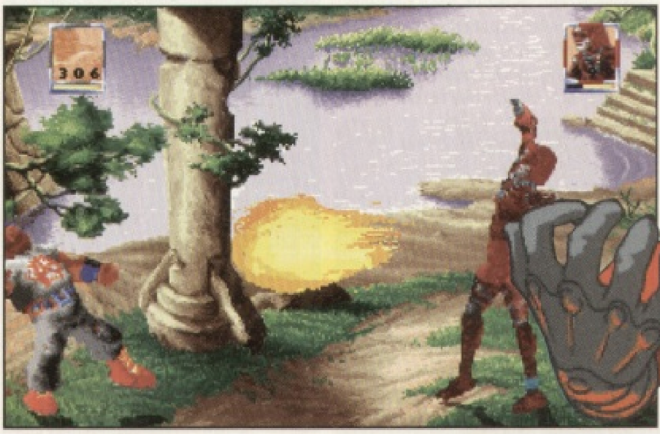
Thankfully the lack of speed hardly affects the gameplay, which Warriors has by the bucket-load. The two-player game is excellent, while the varying difficulty settings make the single player fights suitable for gamers of all skill levels.

Ideally you'll need to play the game using a Gravis GamePad, although it's still playable using the keyboard to control your fighter. Overall, while Warriors is not *quite* as good as Super Street Fighter II Turbo, it sure as hell is a damn fine alternative.



(Above) "And a-one, a-two, a-one, two, three, four..." Fergus and Corto score a perfect 10 in the Foxtrot.

(Below) Buurrrpppp! Osinkira the African warrior unleashes his fatal death-belch on Meatball.



WARRIORS^CD

MINDSCAPE/ATREID
(01444) 246333
£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 486, SVGA, 4Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive and 5Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; joypad; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- It's one of the most playable beat-'em-ups around.
- The nine difficulty settings make it perfects for armchair warriors of almost any skill level.
- The animation is *so* smooth.

...AND THE BAD

- Visually it's not quite as defined as Super Street Fighter II Turbo.
- Like so many recent games, Warriors really needs a DX2 or better to run smoothly.

Overall

85%

CD

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HOW WE USED TO LIVE

Part 1: ACTION GAMES

BY IAN MATHER

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1 REM***ALIEN***ATTACK***
2 REM**BY***IAN**MATHER***
5 GOSUB7000
10 DIMA(2,2),B(2,2):PLAY"T255V31":HS=199:REM**BY**ME**
20 PMODE3,1:SCREEN1,0:COLOR4,3:PCLS
30 LINE(0,179)-(255,192),PSET,BF
40 FORN=30TO226STEP98
50 DRAW"BM"+STR$(N)+",169M+8,+9L16M+9,-9":PAINT(N,172),4,4:NEXT
60 DRAW"C2BM0,169R255"
70 FORN=0TO255STEP6:PRESET(N,169):NEXT
80 DRAW"BM10,188R4U2L4U2R4BR4NR4D4R4BR4U4R4D4NL4BR4U4R4D1M-2,+1M+2,+1D1BR4HR4U2H [illegible]
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U2R4BD4":A$(7)="BR4U4L4BM+4,+4":A$(8)="R4U4L4D3U1R4D2":A$(9)="R4U4L4D2R4D2"
95 GOSUB6010
100 DRAW"C1BM0,7M+2,-1U6R2D6HM+2,+1U1R2U4L6D4":PSET(2,2,3):PSET(4,2,3):SC=0:B=3
110 GET(0,0)-(7,7),A
120 DRAW"C2BM0,9BR2D7R2U7D3R2L6D1R6
130 GET(0,0)-(7,16),B
140 LINE(0,0)-(20,20),PRESET,BF
145 POKE65494,0:X=16:Y=10:ME=4:RR=9:W=0
150 IFB>5THENB=5
153 C(1)=B*2:C(2)=B*2:C(3)=B*2:IFME>9THENME=9
154 COLOR4,3:LINE(232,180)-(240,180),PSET,BF:COLOR2,3
156 DRAW"BM232,188"+A$(ME)
160 FORT=1TO3:COLOR4,3:LINE((T-1)*98+26,170)-((T-1)*98+32,174),PSET,BF:COLOR2, [illegible]
DRAW"BM"+STR$((T-1)*98+26)+",170"+A$(B*2):NEXTT
170 FORN=1TO100:PSET(RND(256),RND(160),2):NEXT
180 FORT=1TO5:L(T)=RND(12)+10:M(T)=RND(3):O(T)=L(T):F(T)=0:NEXT
190 PUT(X*8,Y*8)-(X*8+7,Y*8+7),B
200 FORT=1TORR:IFPEEK(341)=223ANDY>0THENY=Y-1:GOSUB1000:LINE(X*8 [illegible]
,(Y+1)*8+8),PRESET,BF
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1995

COMPUTER AND VIDEO GAMES

Things have changed a lot in the 14 years since CVG was launched. And they're changing again with the arrival of the new 32-bit powerhouse consoles and Pentium-powered PCs. There's one magazine that gives you the best of all worlds – CVG. We cover all the major releases for every system, so whether you own a SNES, Mega Drive, PC, Amiga, Jaguar, 3DO, CD-i, 32X, Mega-CD, Game Boy, Game Gear, PlayStation or Saturn, there's only one mag that's worth reading...

Computer and Video Games. On sale the 15th of every month.

PC GAMES STAR

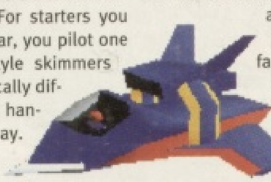
Slipstream 5000 CD

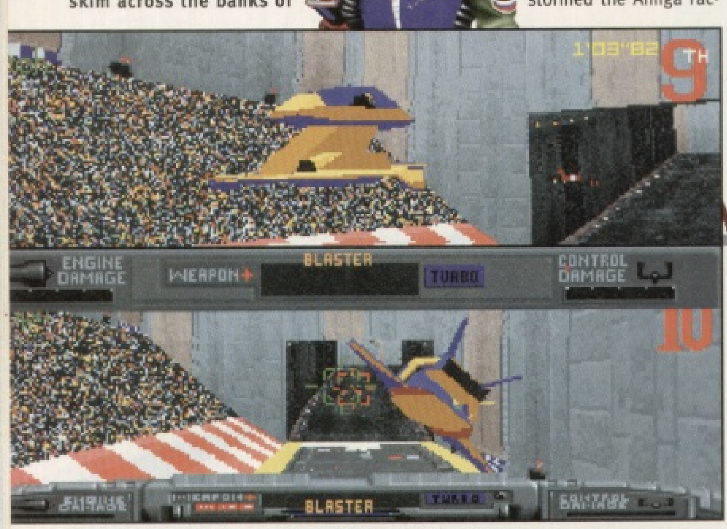
Alex Simmons hits Mach 4 in Gremlin Interactives's brilliant futuristic racer.

I doubt you've ever experienced anything like Slipstream 5000 before. It's a racing game, but one that doesn't abide to the strict rules and regulations of Formula 1 — or even the laws of gravity, for that matter. You don't just drive along stretching bends or through tight chicanes, you skim across the banks of the river Amazon and even fly along narrow tunnels cut through the pyramids of Egypt.

This is the motor sport of the 22nd Century — it's motor sport with an attitude. Forget the petty rivalry between Michael Schumacher and Damon Hill, if you're cut up by another driver in Slipstream you shoot the crap out of their car before ramming them off the track!

From the garage of Gremlin Interactive, who stormed the Amiga racing scene with their acclaimed Lotus Esprit games, Slipstream is a far cry from NASCAR Racing and other conventional driving games. For starters you don't actually drive a car, you pilot one of 10 Flash Gordon-style skimmers that, although cosmetically different from each other, handle in much the same way. The pilots too vary in both their appearance, demeanour and nationality, but again this doesn't affect the gameplay in anyway whatsoever.





Slipstream's hugely-enjoyable two-player mode can be played split-screen or via a serial link, while the excellent eight-way multi-player option can only be played over a network.

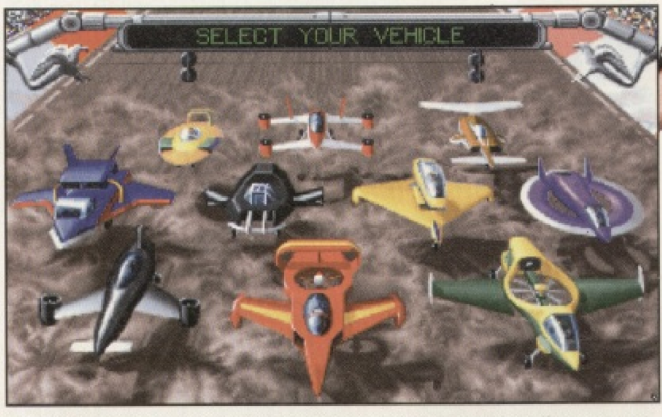
After choosing whether to enter the championship or race a on single circuit, drivers can initially only compete on the first course, Arizona. To access the remaining nine tracks you must first qualify during practice or finish in the top four while racing, so only after a full-blown season will you have the option to speed around the streets of Tokyo or through the snowy fjords of Norway.

Starting with a bank balance of just $750, after selecting your ship you then have the option of upgrading it. Although each craft comes ready equipped with a bog-standard laser and a turbo boost, more powerful alternatives can be purchased in the shop. Aside from bigger, better lasers, disrupter cannons (that short-circuit the target's control systems), high-explosive rockets, heat-seeking missiles, floating mines and smoke-screens are all readily available and are reasonably priced, while bigger, faster turbo boosters cost a lot more and therefore should be left until you've notched up a couple of wins.

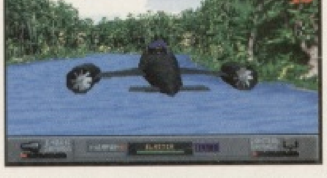
Also available are targeting computers that lock onto competing skimmers with ease, as well as a faster-loading mechanism which reduces laser recharge times, and a supercharger that increases the car's top speed, albeit only slightly. Initially most of these items stretch well beyond your credit limits, although extra cash can be earned by winning races and also by collecting the bonus icons that litter the tracks.

There five types of power-up, left behind by the none-competing drone cars each time they're shot. Apart from awarding cash, the icons temporarily boost your speed and replenish your store of turbos, as well as repair damage to both the engine and control systems. An alternative method of repairing your ship is to fly through the pit lane, which branches off from the main circuit and cuts deep underground before passing through a rotating electrified tunnel that gradually restores energy to the ship.

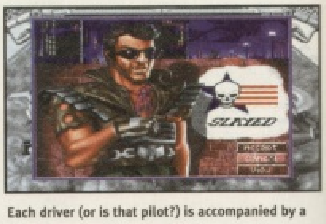
The skimmers are controlled with either the keyboard, the mouse or the joystick (the latter is most definitely recommended), and their powerful thrusters allow them to reach speed of over 400mph. As they don't have brakes, they're not the easiest of vehicles to control, and flying around is made considerably more difficult by the opposing racers who constantly scratch and claw their way to the front of the



There are ten skimmers to choose from, from the futuristic equivalent of a Skoda (top-left) to a space-age Porsche (bottom-left). Although they look different, they handle much the same as each other.



You want external views? You got 'em! There are loads in Slipstream — this is just one of them.



Each driver (or is that pilot?) is accompanied by a brief background history and gritty portrait.

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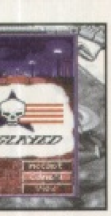
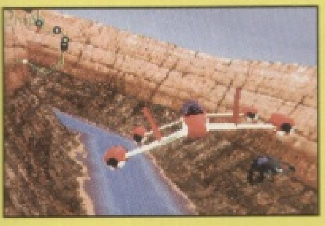
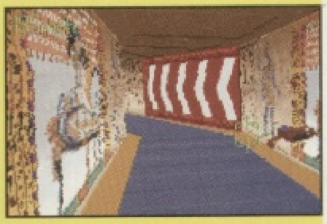


companied by a
y portrait.

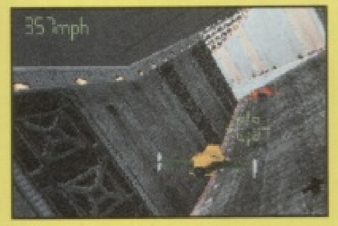
Slipstreamers *Ready!*



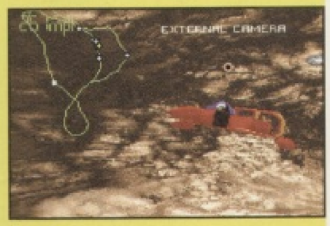
Arizona
The canyons are fairly wide on this starter course, so you can pretty much floor it all the way round — but watch out for tight tunnel sections!



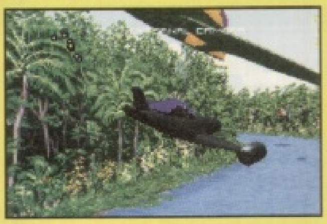
Egypt
Scream through the Pyramids at break-neck speeds in one of the most thrilling tracks in the Slipstream season, Egypt.



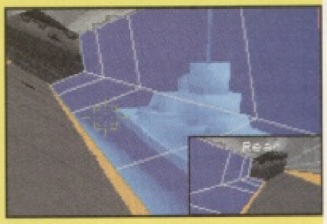
Chicago
A fast but deceptively tricky course, the underground tunnels are relatively easy-going although the moving gates may cause problems.



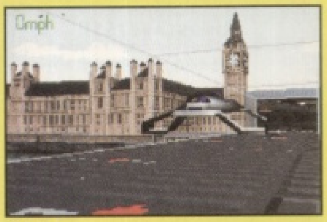
France
Take time out to take in a few of the sights of Paris including the Eiffel Tower and the Arc De Triomphe. From under the ground.



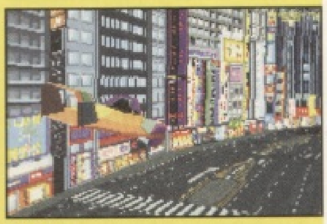
Amazon
The winding Amazon river-bed course is one of the easiest, and providing you can turbo ahead of the pack, retaining the lead shouldn't be too hard.



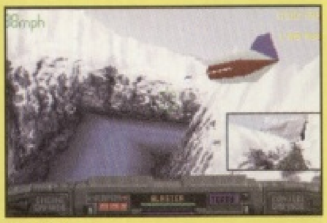
Hawaii
You won't find stretching white sandy beaches and busty blondes in bikinis on this circuit, just a loads of underwater tunnels.



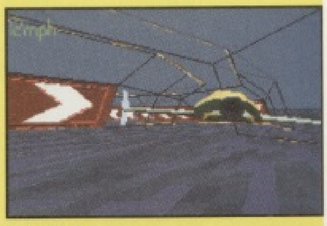
London
Back in old Blighty, racing through the streets of London and along the Thames is a cinch — apart from the corner leading up to the tunnel section.



Tokyo
The neon-lit streets of Japan's capital are perfect for pushing the pedal to the metal, taking your skimmer to the limits.



Norway
Ahh, the fjords of Norway! They provide a picturesque backdrop for what is actually a very difficult track. Avoid those sheer cliff faces!



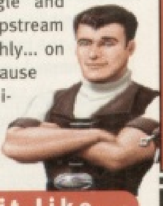
New York
Forget New York's jagged skylines, there are absolutely no buildings in this sparse but nevertheless challenging course.

pack, ramming and blasting Sunday drivers out of the way in the hope of grabbing victory.

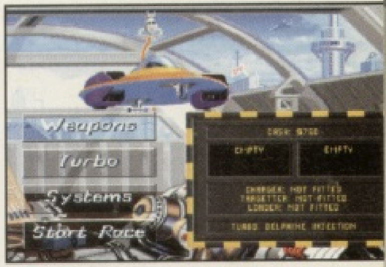
The circuits get progressively more difficult throughout the course of the game, and are designed in such a way as to prevent drivers from racing around the whole of the course at top speed. Because the skimmers fly rather than drive, it's almost like piloting an aircraft rather than steering a car — not only can you turn left and right, you can fly up and down, so in Arizona you're pretty much free either to glide high along the ridge of the canyons or to dart low along the narrow, more treacherous canyon bed. This gives the game a tremendous sense of height and depth, a feeling that's especially impressive when racing on the Tokyo street circuit.

Many of the tracks also split in two, so finding the shortest route around the track is vital. This is made easier by the map that appears in the top-left of the screen, but bear in mind the shortest path is usually the hardest. Thankfully difficult sections of the track are made less stressful by the self-righting control system which points you back in the right direction after any spectacularly bad crashes.

In addition to the one-player race, there's also a two-player split-screen game or serial-link option, plus an eight-way network game, all of which are tremendously good fun because human competitors are less predictable than the computer-controlled drivers. That said, the game's artificial intelligence is very good — the other drivers actually race against you rather than simply speeding off in front.



In both the single and multi-player games Slipstream runs incredibly smoothly... on a Pentium P90. Because the game is so graphically detailed you really do need a monster machine to run it — on anything less than a 66MHz DX2 the game starts to chug, and that's with the texture-mapping switched off and the shading toned down. It is possible to play on a 33MHz machine, but whether you'd want to is another matter entirely.



Save up a bit of cash and you'll be able splash out on goodies bought from this shop.

There's no denying this is a brilliant game though, so the message is quite simple: if you've got a Pentium, get Slipstream 5000. It's slick texture-mapped graphics really are superb and it rates as just about the most exciting, playable racing game on the PC at the moment. If you've only got a puny 486, though, think carefully before snapping it up — unless you like games that run slower than a tortoise in syrup, you'll probably be bitterly disappointed.

It's a bit like...

...Well, there isn't actually anything *that* similar to Slipstream, to be honest. It's similar to Descent in that you fly through tight twisting tunnels and fire like crazy, but then again you could say it bears a resemblance to a bog-standard game like NASCAR Racing. Whatever, it's brilliant, so what does it matter?

SLIPSTREAM 5000^{CD}

GREMLIN/SOFTWARE REFINERY

(01742) 753423

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 486, VGA, 4Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive and 20Mb hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; Joystick; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- The texture-mapped graphics are quite literally stunning.
- Fast? On a Pentium, Slipstream *really* shifts!
- By far one of the most playable action racers around.

...AND THE BAD

- You're gonna need a beast of a machine to play this baby.
- Some may say it's a bit too hard but — ha! — what do they know.

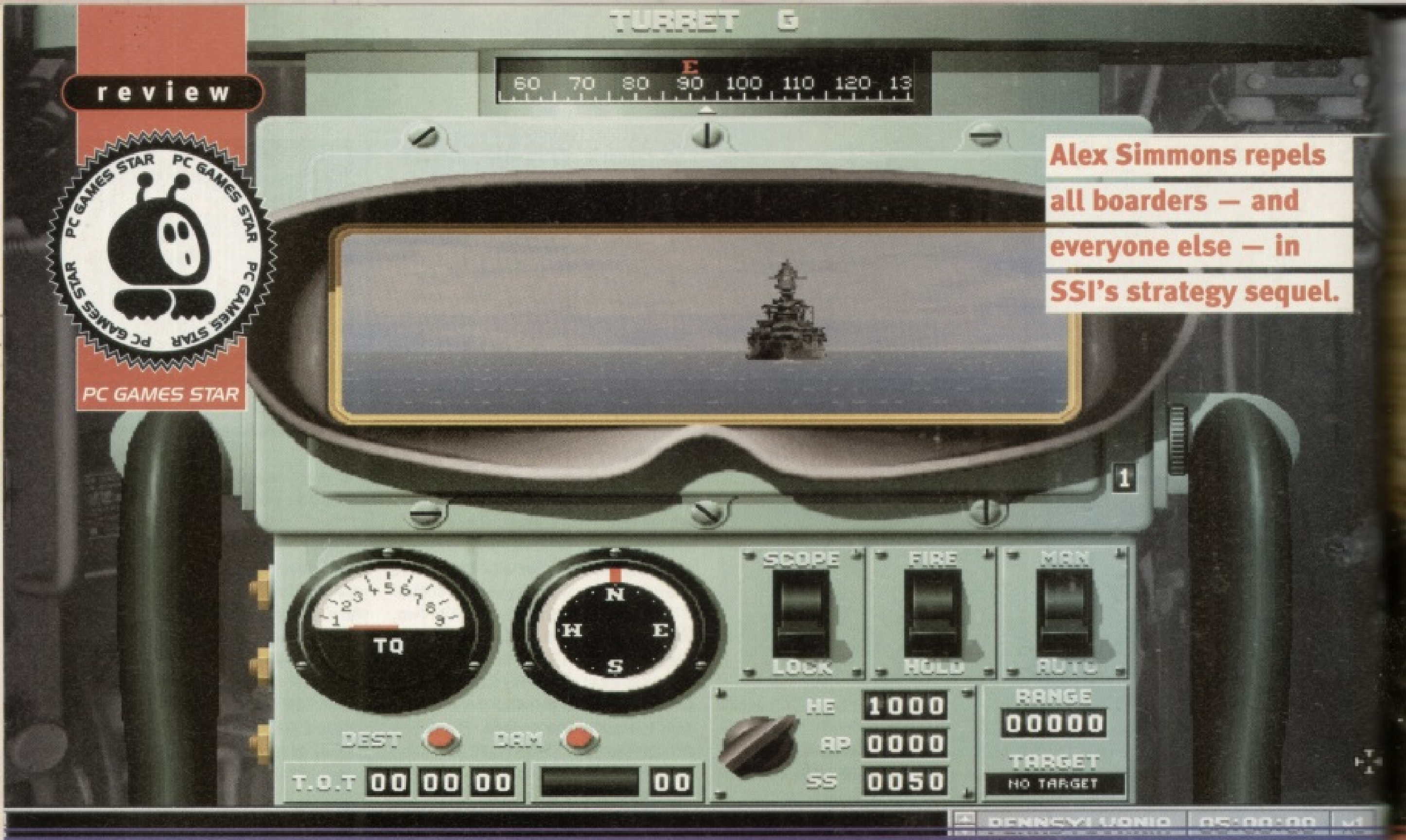
Overall

90%

Great Naval Battles 3

Alex Simmons repels all boarders — and everyone else — in SSI's strategy sequel.

PC GAMES STAR



Hot on the heels of last year's Great Naval Battles 2 we now get SSI's Great Naval Battles 3. Okay, so it's not the most original of titles, but the game more than makes up for it with sheer quality of design. Most sequels of this nature are little more than add-ons — all you get are a few new scenarios plus (if you're lucky) retouched graphics.

With GNB3 it's the other way around. GNB2 dealt primarily with just one campaign from the Pacific War, namely Guadalcanal. GNB3, on the other hand, chucks in everything but the kitchen sink. Coral Sea, Leyte Gulf, Midway — you get all this and more in just one package, when you might have expected to see them released in dribs and drabs as scenario disks. So hats off to SSI for producing one of the best value wargame packages ever.

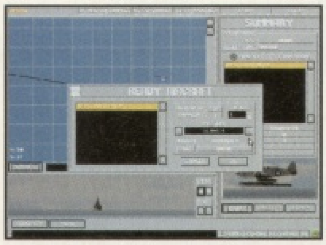
In addition to the historical campaigns there's also a scenario builder and even a random scenario generator. You can fight anything from single-ship actions to huge multi-taskforce battles. The possibilities are endless.

True, the interface and presentation have changed very little from GNB2 — but then, that's hardly surprising, because the last game was so recent and it was very good indeed. The most noticeable new feature is a view window which appears at the bottom of the Flagbridge screen, to add a bit of colour to the dry business of map-reading.

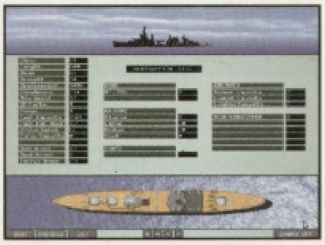
Of more significance is a new feature handling submarine warfare. The subs don't actually appear on the map, for which relief much thanks: there's already quite enough going on with surface ships and aircraft! But once they've been assigned patrol sectors they'll start feeding back priceless info. Intelligence-gathering is at the heart of the game — you've got to locate the enemy, particularly his carriers, before he finds you, and get the first airstrike in at all costs. It's nail-biting stuff.

One of the great virtues of the GNB games is that they allow you to choose exactly how much of a hands-on approach you want to go for. If you wish you can control individual ships, navigate and fire torpedoes, control (though not aim) the big guns and watch the enemy go up in smoke through your binoculars. But if you don't fancy that, if all you want is high-level strategy, then you can just leave ship-to-ship details on automatic and concentrate on playing admiral.

Great Naval Battles 3 is a marvellous game, and a significant improvement on what was already a superb series. I wouldn't recommend it to action fans, but if you're a strategy buff, this is a must-have purchase.



Your first job is to find the enemy. Although you've got search planes, it takes half an hour to ready them for launch so you've got to think ahead.



The view from the Flagbridge is the same as in GNB2, only with the addition of the attractive view window at the bottom.

GREAT NAVAL BATTLES 3

MINDSCAPE/SSI
(01444) 246333
£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, SVGA, 4Mb RAM and 14Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Aria, Wave Blaster and Soundman Wave soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Offers hundreds of hours of top-notch gameplay.
- Excellent all-round value.
- Superb graphics and presentation.
- Heaven for strategy fans.

...AND THE BAD

- The interface is a bit fiddly.

Overall

90%

Front Lines^{CD}

Dave Upchurch slips into 'serious' mode for Impressions' futuristic tank wargame.

Yes, it's official — Impressions' games really ARE getting better. After years of producing pretty dodgy low-end stuff with some totally awful graphics, they're finally producing the absolute business. And Front Lines is yet another little gem. It's a simple but addictive turn-based wargame, played on a hex-grid terrain that's beautifully rendered in crisp high-res SVGA.

Set in the near-future, the feel is very similar to that fine old warhorse Perfect General's, but the sheer quality of design and production make Front Lines infinitely more pleasurable to play. There's also much, much more gameplay — there's not only the usual pre-programmed scenarios, but also a comprehensive editor to enable you to do-it-yourself.

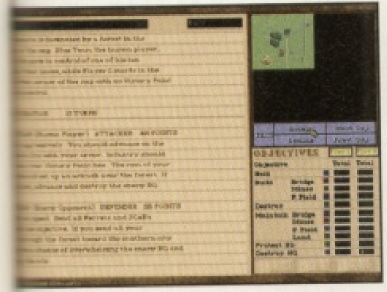
Front Lines is a snappy, easy-to-play wargame with the emphasis strictly on fun and not at all on realism. The sequence of play is very simple. Your units are individually highlighted one by one, you move everything you want to, and then fire. Everything in range of your units' weapons is automatically highlighted to make your choice of enemy target easier, and combat is resolved simultaneously to make it as fair as possible.

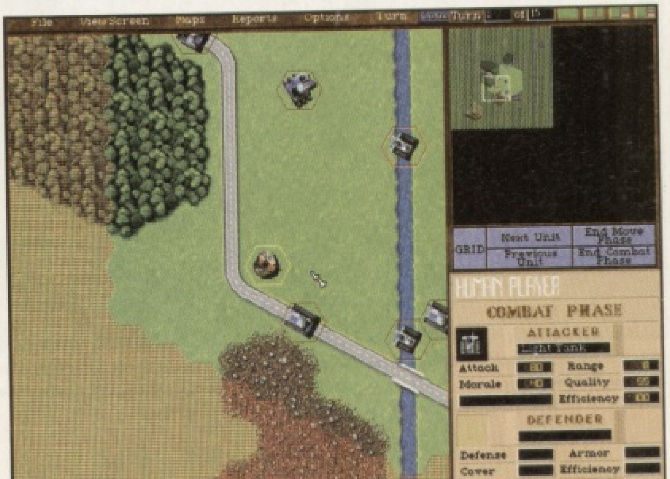
In the bigger scenarios you'll have a lot of units at your disposal, ranging from bog-standard infantry to four classes of artillery and five of armour, culminating in the slow but awesomely powerful Mega Tank. Objectives vary, but as in any Capture-The-Flag game losing your HQ is always a bad move.

There's nothing stunningly original about Front Lines, it just happens to be very well done and it's great fun to play. My only real quibble is a standard one with games of this type, and it's that the computer's AI just isn't subtle enough. The enemy always seems to come at you in dribs and drabs — they seem to have no idea how to concentrate their forces, so the end result is that with just a little tactical finesse and a few games'-worth of experience it's easy to outmanoeuvre and defeat them in detail even if you're forces are heavily outnumbered.

There are two solutions to this somewhat irksome problem. One is to play the game against a human opponent — and it's quite feasible for two players to share a screen, even if that does entail a bit of waiting around. The other option is to go to the game's in-built scenario editor and stack up the odds against yourself so high that even a Napoleon or a Hannibal would end up getting thumped.

Although it's only a reworking of familiar themes, Front Lines is so well done that it should appeal even to those of you who normally steer well clear of wargames. Although it's turn based it has an arcadey feel to it — a kind of thinking person's shoot-'em-up. As long as you've got a decent-speed machine (ignore the specs — you'll need a 486 at least to enjoy this fully) Front Lines will offer long hours of fun and excitement.





(Above) Choose a scenario and you're taken to a briefing screen.
(Right) Each unit fires in turn, with all the available targets highlighted. The computer then works out if you've hit or not.

FRONT LINES^{CD}

IMPRESSIONS/IN-HOUSE

(0181) 789 0329

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, SVGA, 4Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Hayes-compatible modem; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Roland and Gravis UltraSound soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Superb, crisply-drawn SVGA graphics.
- Lots of varied, interesting scenarios.
- Excellent DIY scenario editor.

...AND THE BAD

- The computer's AI lacks subtlety.
- Too slow, even on a decent machine.

Overall

82%

PC GAMES STAR

Flight Unlimited CD

Alex Simmons flies the friendly skies with Virgin's purer-than-the-driven-snow flight simulation.

Since the very dawn of time, one of mankind's most cherished wishes has been to be able to fly. And amazingly, it's less than a century since the pioneering Wright brothers first took to the skies and ushered in the modern era of aviation.

Sadly, however, must of us will never experience the thrill of 'real' flying; unless you're a member of the airforce or have the moolah to splash out on expensive flying lessons, it's likely the closest you'll get is sitting in economy class with your knees tucked under your chin, eating inedible food and being ignored by surly stewardesses.

Fortunately, if you have a powerful PC, you can experience what is undoubtedly the next best thing to the real thing — Looking Glass Technologies' Flight Unlimited. Flight Unlimited, it has to be stressed, can't really be classed as a game; it's a pure simulation of flying. There are no primary objectives, air-to-ground missiles or, er, 'bogies' here — just you, the sky, the ground, and a tiny prop-driven aircraft. But despite the lack of conventional 'action', this is one of the most enjoyable pieces of software we've seen in ages.

Flight Unlimited oozes sheer class from the outset. Upon full installation of the game (which is inadvisable on a hard drive with anything less than 130Mbs of space free!), you find yourself in the fixed base of operations (the FBO), which is essentially the game's options screen. However, it's unlike any options screen you've ever seen before — it can best be described as 'Doom in a portacabin'.

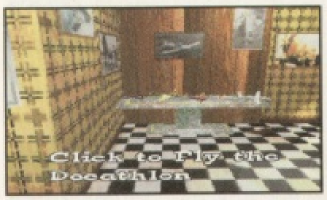
As you glide smoothly around the lovingly texture-mapped 3D environment, you can access all the game's features simply by moving into the relevant area of the room. Walk up to a table of model aircraft, for example, and you can select a plane to fly (from five, in total). Walk up to a spinning globe of the Earth, and you can transfer to different airbases around the States. In addition, you can enroll for flying lessons or enter flying competitions complete with critical judging. It's all very clever.

After playing around inside the FBO for a while, you'll no doubt be itching to get out onto the runway and take to the skies. This is where Flight Unlimited really comes into its own. Aanyone familiar with the majority of 'pure' flight sims already available for the PC will recognise the style of graphical representation. Like Flight Sim 5, Flight Unlimited employs 'photorealistic scenery' to increase the sensation of really 'being there'.

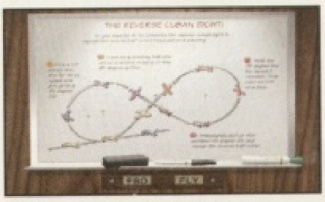
FU supports a wide range of video modes, from full SVGA (that is 1024 x 768 pixel resolution) right down to standard VGA (320 x 200 pixel resolution). Obviously, the lower the res, the less detailed the outside environment, but if you're running the game on anything less than a 90MHz Pentium this is the price you're going to have to pay.

The difference between Flight Unlimited and Flight Sim 5 is that, while FS5 treats the world as a predominantly flat, bump-free plain, FU accurately reproduces the terrain's contours. The incredible landscapes were modelled by photographing actual landscapes from two slightly different angles. These images were then scanned into the computer, and the differences between the two were used to calculate land height and other variables.

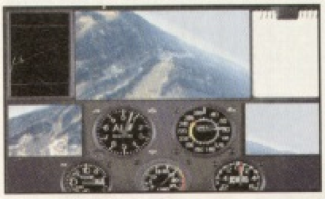
This method produces what is without doubt the most stunningly realistic representation of a real-world land mass ever. There are rolling hills and



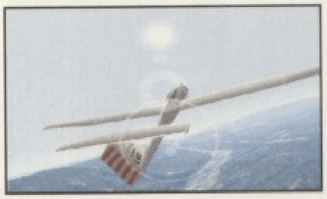
This is the 'fixed base of operation' From here all the major sections of the game are accessed, as you roam around in glorious 3D Doom-a-vision.



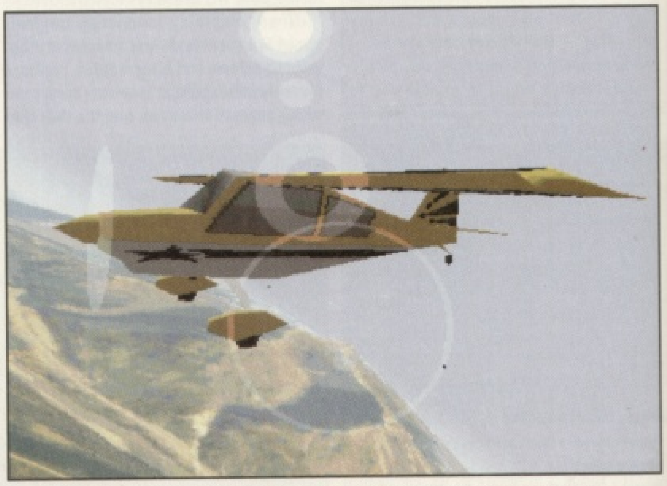
To help you get the most out of FU there's an instructor on-hand to guide you through all the basic (and not-so-basic) moves.



Flight Unlimited allows you to have multiple view windows open. This allows you to gauge your fancy flying moves from a better angle.



As well as prop-driven aircraft, FU also gives you the chance to fly a glider. For this you're going to need to learn about thermals and air currents.



Boo-hoo! Doesn't this just make you want to cry? After spending an arm and a leg on all that fancy 486/DX2 stuff, you now realise that the only thing that's really worth having is a 90MHz Pentium and a copy of Flight Unlimited. Bugger!

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valleys, sheer cliff faces that can be put to good effect (one of the aircraft modelled is a glider, and for that you're going to need thermals) and a whole host of other graphical touches that make the FU world seem, well, real.

The aircraft themselves are also rendered with an exact attention to detail. Control surfaces move, pilot canopies are shaded and the whole kit and caboodle is light-sourced superbly. Speaking of light, watch out for the sun glinting off the wings and fuselage, and also the halo effect when the external camera is pointed into the sun during out-of-cockpit flying. Excellent stuff.

Okay, so the graphics redefine state-of-the-art and the presentation is flawless, but when it comes to flight sims there's really only one thing that true PC flight jocks care about — and that's the flight model. In all the sims that have gone before there have been modifications made to the flight models. No matter that they claim to be the most exact and realistic found on any sim this side of Jupiter, the fact is there's always a trade-of between total authenticity and raw computing power.

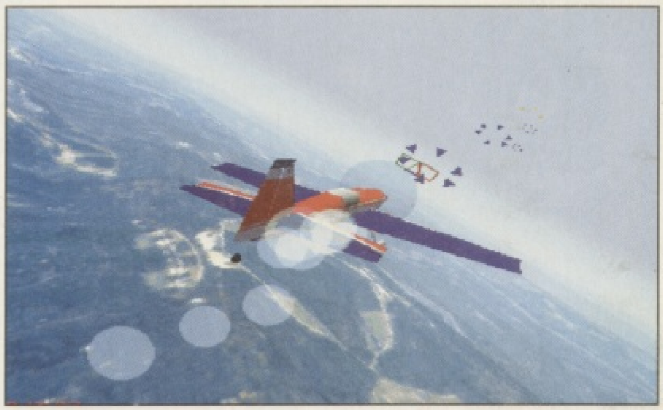
Looking Glass Technologies has taken this equation, chewed on it for a while and then spat it out into a small red plastic bucket. Flight Unlimited is totally authentic. Instead of taking the plane and basing the flight model around that, Looking Glass has taken the plane and modelled the air that flows around it. This is a subtle difference, but one that allows the aircraft in Flight Unlimited to behave in almost exactly the same way that their metal and composite counterparts do.

Snap rolls are sharp and biting, stall turns are convincing (and somewhat nauseating), and the whole grey area of flight model inertia has been handled in a way that feels perfect. Flying the aircraft presented here has that 'unbalanced' feel to it which gives the pilot the sense that he is only just in control, and one wrong move will end in a spin. No other sim offers this kind of modelling, and the kinds of manoeuvres that can be attempted in Flight Unlimited cannot be performed on ANY other PC flight sim anywhere.

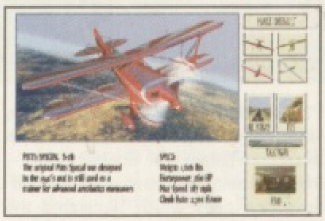
Can there be a flip side to this flight junky's golden coin? Well, all of this exact mathematical modelling and geographical accuracy comes at a price. How does a £2,000 90MHz Pentium grab you? No, well any less than this and you are going to lose the speed and fluidity that makes this game so special. The recommended minimum is a 50MHz 486/DX, but if you opt for this then you are going to find that the whole thing becomes slow and jerky rather quickly, even in VGA. A more realistic minimum spec would be a 60MHz Pentium.

Another slightly black cloud on the otherwise clear blue horizon is the fact that there isn't anything to do other than fly. As mentioned before, there are no bad guys, no missiles, no guns and no navigation challenges to worry about. This is a purist's sim in the true sense of the word, allowing those who would like the chance to try their hand at real acrobatic flying the opportunity from the comfort of their living rooms. Strap into a glass fibre cockpit, get out the Thrustmaster gear and rudder pedals and you ARE in a Pits special or a Sukhoi 31 — it really is that good.

In years to come Flight Unlimited could well be recognised as the first real flight simulator ever to appear on the PC. But why wait? The future is right here now.



If simple flying is not your thing then why not try your hand at diving between the hoops! Successful completion means a reward of a fish and... Oh sorry, I was thinking of dolphins. See the hoops, get the plane and fly, fly, fly. Have fun!

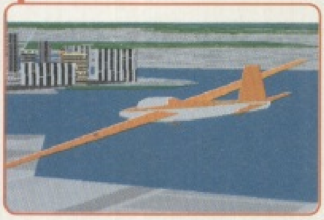


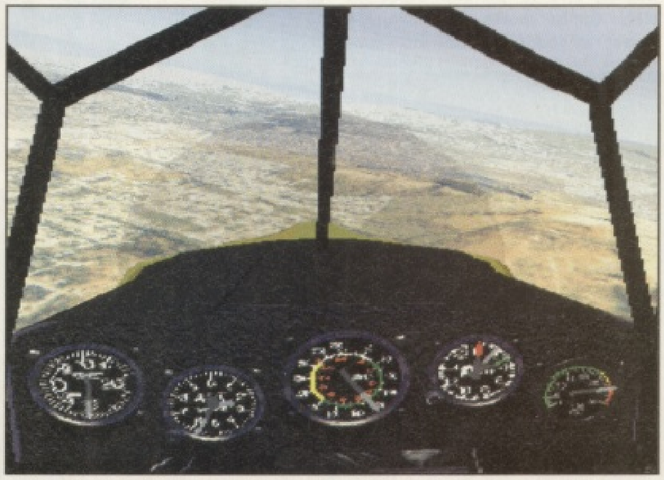
Each of the five planes has its own info panel detailing its tech specs.

The pilot's biggest enemy is, er, well, the ground, actually. Scratch another plane...

It's a bit like...

Hmmm. To be honest there's nothing that gets even close to Flight Unlimited. The whole idea behind the program was to create a realistic, fully-acrobatic aircraft inside your computer, and to that end creators Looking Glass Technologies have succeeded. If you want similar graphics but a more sedate flying style (complete with cross-country navigational challenges), then try Flight Simulator 5.





As if all this fancy hoo-ha wasn't enough, there's also the option of linking-up a home VR helmet. Whack it into the computer, tell FU that it's there and away you go. Flying on a PC doesn't get *any* better than this. See and believe!

FLIGHT UNLIMITED^CD

VIRGIN/LOOKING GLASS
(0181) 960 2255
£TBA OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 486, VGA, 8Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive and 35Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster, Gravis UltraSound, Ensoniq SoundScape and Roland soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- An incredible flight model that has to be flown to be believed.
- Superior graphics that really are photo-realistic.
- Super-slick presentation.
- The closest thing to flying a plane on the PC.

...AND THE BAD

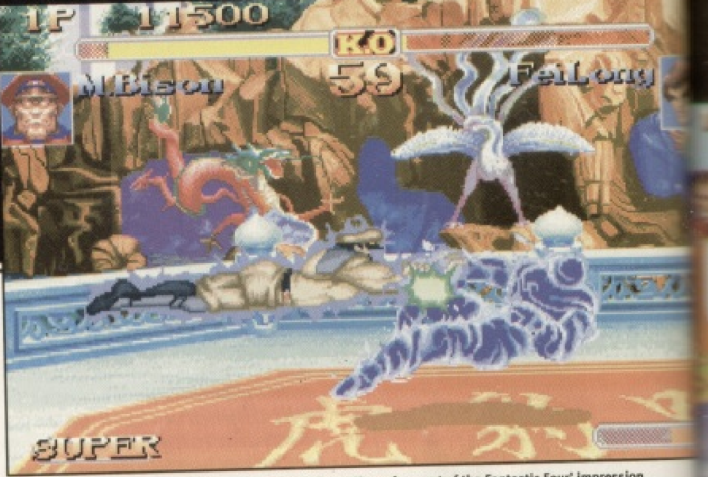
- To get the most out of it you're ging to need a monster machine.
- There's nothing to do other than just fly, which could be a bit limiting for some people.

Overall

94%

PC GAMES STAR

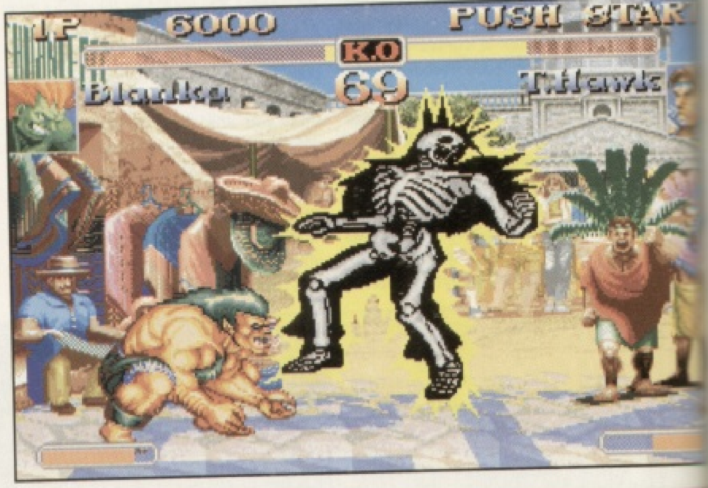
Super



(Above) M. Bison encourages Fei Long to do his 'Johnny Flame from out of the Fantastic Four' impression. Doh! He got the colours of the flames wrong!

(Right) Two of SF2's fattest geezers battle for supremacy in a Chinese-style bathroom. Mind the Ajax!

(Below) Some shocking behaviour from Blanka (hoot!). Serves T. Hawk right for wearing flares.



Got an active social life? GameTek want to put a stop to that. David Upchurch loses his forever.

The name Streetfighter has always seemed a little incongruous to me. The last time I saw a fight in the street I certainly didn't catch sight of a single Dragon Punch or Sonic Boom. If the game's programmers had wanted to mimic their source matter more closely, surely they'd have armed the participants with broken beer bottles and soggy doner kebabs instead of silly pyjama suits (which would, admittedly, get them into a fight in any street).

But let's not bicker. Streetfighter is, after all, the most successful coin-op series of all time. The original game — released many years ago with pneumatic punch pads which translated the blows thrown by the player into on-screen attacks — was a total stiff. The sequel, which dispensed with the gimmickry but introduced the now-clichéd concept of special moves, has grossed more than the Brazilian national debt squared (possibly) and is the third most recognisable game title (after Mario and Sonic) in the world. It's true — it's been proved and everything.

The concept, like three-chord songs and cheesy chips, is pretty simple. Two characters face off over a three-screen length horizontal landscape, beating the fun out of one another with three strengths of both punch and kick (depending upon the buttonage of your chosen controller). It's possible to block incoming attacks by pulling back on the pad/stick/keys/Venusian mind helmet, and to perform especially clever combat moves by combining a number of specific joystick commands

New Faces *(But No Marti Caine)*

Super Streetfighter 2: The College Years features four characters new to the brawling gig. Because we at PC GAMES are polite and always remember our manners, we thought we'd take this opportunity to introduce you...

Fei Long

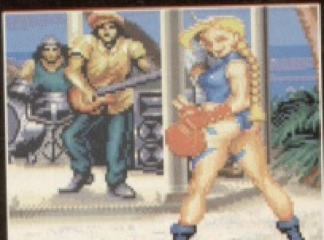
Looking not *at all* like Bruce Lee, this fighter employs the might of Jeet Kune Do (hmm) to great effect. His long-range capabilities are somewhat rubbish, but once he's up close his selection of throws and body blows are devastating.

T. Hawk

A big butch 'Native American' not unlike the one found in The Village People — but don't mention that to his face or you're likely to get a Leaping Windmill Throw in your gob. Big and slow, but his attacks are very powerful indeed.

Cammy

Hailing from good old Blighty is the Tommy Britisher candidate Cammy. She's only little and not very strong, but her special moves are among the best in the game, providing you know how to use them well enough. Hurrah for us, then.



D.J. Maximum

Something of a beginner character, DJ's moves have a decent range but inflict little real damage. However, he's nimble enough to control easily and very simple to get the hang of. And he plays the maracas when he wins.

Four' impression.

Mind the Ajax!

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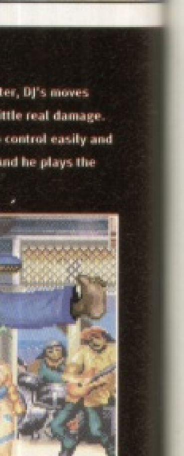
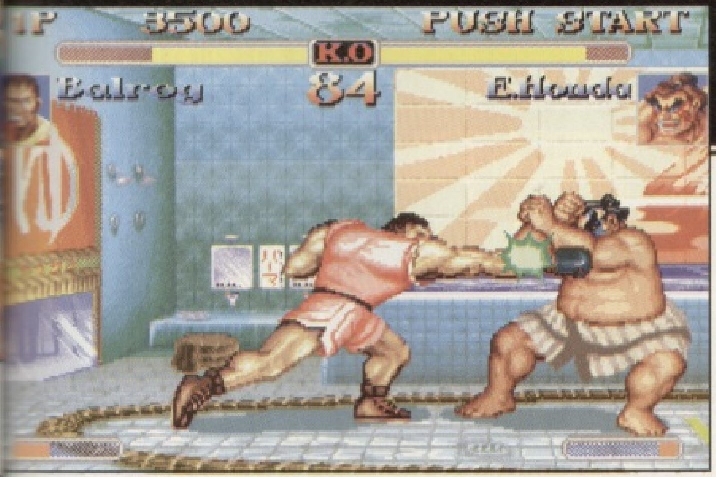


Streetfighter 2 Turbo CD



and button presses in sequence. And that, at the end of the day, is it.

Which makes it all the weirder to think that this is a conversion of the fifth incarnation of the coin-op. You'd think with a premise *that* basic they'd have been able to get it right by the sequel, let alone the fourth blimmin' update. However, as is always the way with these things, there's a lot more to the game than meets the eye.

First of all, there are now sixteen characters to choose from, as opposed to the original's eight, each of whom has their own advantages and disadvantages. Some are faster, some stronger, some absorb damage better and some have the best special moves. Conversely, some are slow, some are weak, some have glass jaws and others never remember their dear old mum's birthday even if you buy them a card to send. Each of these advantages play against one another, so it pays to know how all the characters work, not just the one who seems to match your playing style the best.

Second of all, there are what we 'in the know' refer to as combos (he says, patronisingly). These, for those 'out of the know', are strings of attacks which are timed to prevent the other character from blocking as they're still momentarily stunned from the previous hit. One of the reasons SF2 has come in for so many facelifts is that the programmers weren't aware of the presence of combos when the original version was created. They were actually disovered by the kind of eleven year-old truants you find hanging around arcades all day.

There are thousands of these things, ranging from two hits up as far as you can think of. There are also things like re-dizzy combos, where a character previously stunned for five seconds — signified by comedy birds-around-the-head — is not only smashed about an awful lot but is also biffed into a dizzied state all over again. The snag here is that you need to be able to carry off all those wrist-confusing special moves to be able to perform them. Whereas a regular punch or kick is good for a single hit, most specials (aside from projectile attacks) hit up to three times, expanding combo potential no end.

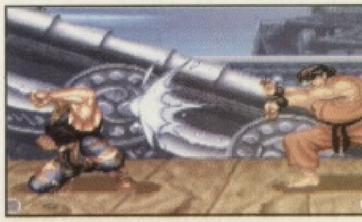
Not that this matters. Learning to play Streetfighter isn't like learning to ride a bike. For one thing it's painless, and for another even the most heinous face-smashing you receive is actually great fun. What makes Streetfighter the success story of gaming is that it's as enjoyable for first-time players as it is for veteran experts, allied with the hope that one day you'll be a hardened top crack elite warrior ninja yourself.

The fact of the matter is that this PC conversion is possibly the closest one yet (no mean feat given the number of conversions over a fermillion formats). The graphics are absolutely spot on, the sprites are the right size, there are even six elephants on Dhalsim's stage instead of the four found on console — so gaming trainspotters should be kept happy. The sound is also almost exactly reproduced, and every element of gameplay from the arcade version has survived the journey.

The only criticism I can really level at the game is that the number of animation frames is reduced unless you're running it on a high-spec machine, but then this is to keep the game speed exactly level with that of the coin-op no matter how crap your PC is, so it's forgiveable. Actually, there is one more point — if you haven't got a four- or six-button joypad, make sure you get hold of one or you'll be missing out on a lot of Streetfighter's strategy element. Put quite simply, this is a full-on, late-nights-ahoy, had-to-drag-me-from-the-machine, I'm-off-for-another-go classic. Thump-tastic!

It's a bit like...

Mortal Kombat 2, which was also completely ace. But it doesn't have the same depth of strategy found in Streetfighter, or the same combo potential, or as many special moves. Basically, whilst MK2 is a fantastic product we wouldn't want to do down, it isn't as good a conversion (or original game) as this is.



(Above) Ryu displays the awesome shirt-wetting power of his water-squirting novelty joke ring.

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MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive and 15Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; joypad; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Pro Audio Spectrum and Gravis UltraSound soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Easily the best beat-'em-up on PC (sorry, MK2!).
- Lasting appeal increased by depth of gameplay.
- Dead easy to get into, even for beat-'em-up beginners.
- Two-player mode offers endless fun.

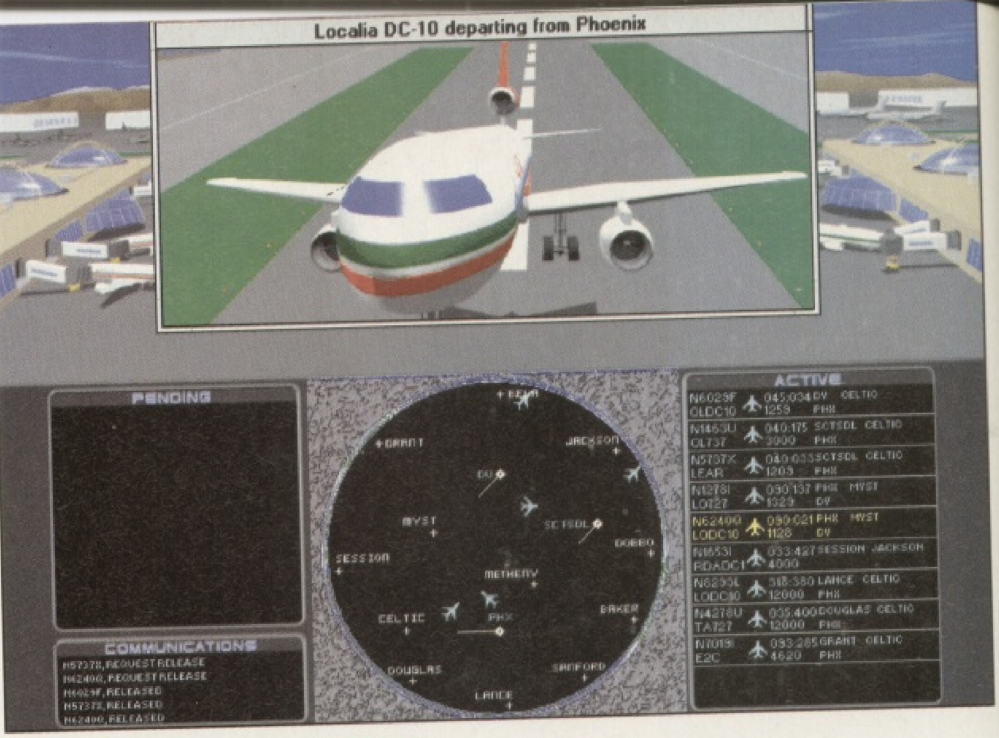
...AND THE BAD

- You've really got to have a joypad to enjoy this at its best.

Overall

92%

David Upchurch flies mile-high with the aid of Trimark's almost excellent airspace management game.



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Air Havoc Controller^CD

Someone, somewhere has a list of films that will never be shown as in-flight movies. The cringe-worthy Airport series, Die Hard 2 and just about anything else depicting graphic airplane-related disasters would prove too distressing for plane-weary travellers, hence their non-appearance on the tiny screen. And if in-flight computer games ever take off (ahem) then Air Havoc Controller will surely have little chance of getting played. Why? Because like the aforementioned films, it shows scenes likely to have passengers reaching for their sick bags.

Air Havoc places you in charge of a small amount of airspace that surrounds three major airports: Phoenix, Deer Valley or Scottsdale. Your job is simply to guide the incoming planes to their stated destinations, be it on the runway at one of your airports, or merely to a radio beacon on the outskirts of your airspace.

The bulk of the game is played in a small circular radar display positioned at the bottom of the screen. Some planes will drift in from the edge of your airspace, while others will request permission to take off. By clicking from plane to plane and issuing instructions with simple pull-down menus, the various craft can be made to climb, dive, speed up or slow down, or forced to change direction in order to avoid impending disasters.

It really is as simple as that — but the challenge lies in ensuring that there are no near misses or, worse still, mid-air collisions. It's a bit like trying to keep about twenty plates spinning on poles, with the plates holding several hundred people made up of soft jam-like flesh ready to be spilled over runways and countryside.

The screenshots may not give the impression that Air Havoc Controller is a deep and absorbing game — but believe me, it is. Even on the easiest of the several difficulty settings, it's head-hurtingly taxing, and on the hardest... well, let's just say that you'll have the blood of several thousand innocent people on your hands if you're anything short of a genius.

"Welcome aboard Upchurch Air Flight 666. I'm your Capt... Er, hang on, where's the bloody clutch?"

Whoops! Perhaps I should have been paying less attention to that foreign 'art' magazine.

The in-game events and disasters are depicted with some nice mini movies, each accompanied by the screams of the casualties as they realise their fate. These films, though not very long, are great to watch, and sometimes pretty horrific. There's no technical jiggery-pokery here, though, as Air Havoc Controller runs in Windows, and uses a standard driver to show these sequences.

Air Havoc Controller could have been completely brilliant, but its shortcomings are so frustrating that they tarnish what could have otherwise been a perfectly playable simulation. For starters, there's no 'win' sequence — successfully complete your shift and you're simply rewarded with a bog-standard Windows text box revealing your score. But perhaps the most criminal mistake is the inclusion of a video viewer, which allows you to sit back, relax and watch the various scenes contained on the disc without having to play the thing. In other words, ther game contains no rewards, either for success or failure, meaning that there's no real incentive to do better when you play.

That said, if you're a points-oriented games-player with enough self-discipline to not watch the clips, then Air Havoc Controller should prove to be a surprisingly playable sim.

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MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 486, SVGA, 8Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive, Windows 3.1 and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Any Windows-compatible soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- Although very simple-looking, it's surprisingly absorbing.
- Great — if often quite disturbing — animated video clips.
- Every game presents a fresh new challenge.

...AND THE BAD

- Lack of 'win' screens could prove quite off-putting.
- The video clips can be accessed at any stage, negating the need to actually play the game.
- The speech is a bit wonky at times.

Overall

76%

SX

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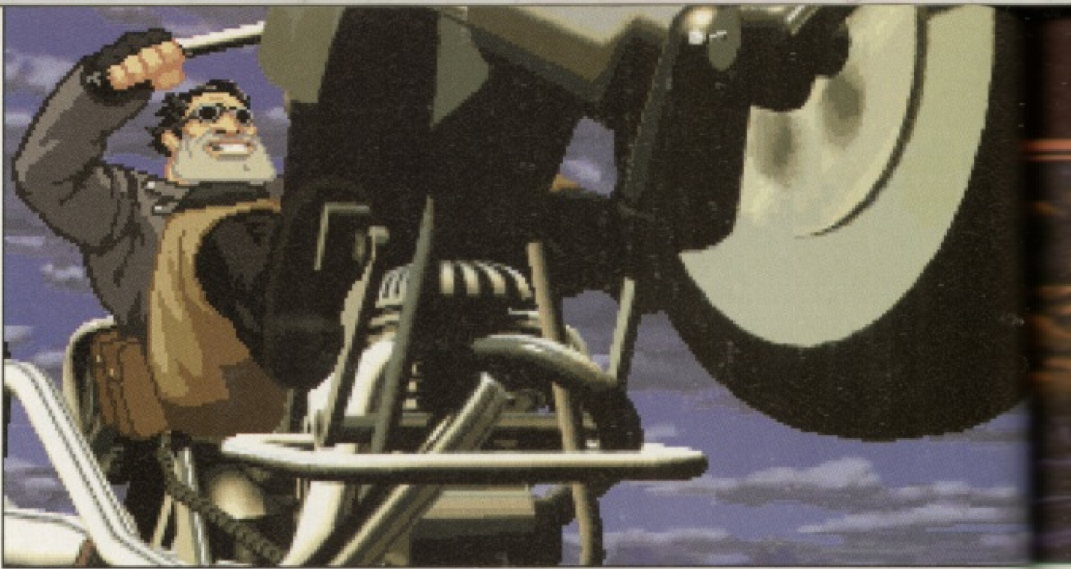
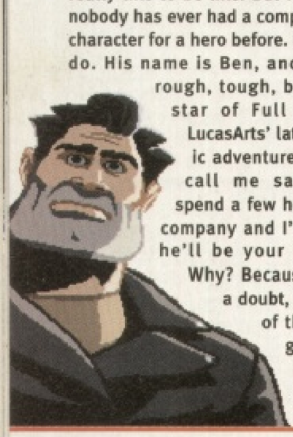
PC GAMES STAR

Full Throttle CD

David Upchurch, leader of the PC GAMES pack, burns rubber with LucasArts' ultra-stylish graphic adventure.


(Above) Here's Full Throttle's Ben in his natural habitat — on one massive bike, wheelying down the freeway, not a care in the world. And after you've spent an hour or so in his company, I'll bet that you'll want to join him.

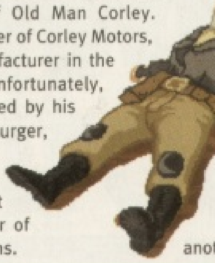
Everyone has a hero. Everyone has somebody they look up to and admire, somebody that they'd really like to be like. But I'll bet that nobody has ever had a computer game character for a hero before. I, however, do. His name is Ben, and he's the rough, tough, bike-riding star of Full Throttle, LucasArts' latest graphic adventure. Okay, so call me sad — but spend a few hours in his company and I'll bet that he'll be your hero too. Why? Because without a doubt, Ben is one of the coolest game heroes ever.



Built like the proverbial brick, er, 'outhouse', clad in jet-black biking leathers and boasting a ox-like stubble-covered jaw you could strike matches on, Ben is the epitome of biker cool. Even better than his looks is his voice; a deep, rumbling drawl that makes the bloke who did the voice-overs for the old Carlsberg lager telly adverts sound positively high-pitched.

Sure, Ben may rough people up from time to time. And lie. And steal. But if he does, it's only because circumstances dictate that he has to — at the end of the day, his heart's in the right place (just to left of the base of his rib-cage, if you really want to know). He doesn't go out looking for trouble, the problem is that trouble has an unfortunate habit of finding him.

Yes, Ben may be a rebel — but at least he's a rebel with a cause. He's on the run from the law, after being framed for the murder of Old Man Corley. Corley was the owner of Corley Motors, the last bike manufacturer in the United States. Unfortunately, Corley was murdered by his sinister aide, Ripburger, who plans to take control of Corley Motors and turn it into a manufacturer of — gasp! — mini-vans.



With his loyal biker gang, the Polecats, all thrown in jail as accomplices to the heinous crime, Ben has no option but to take to the lonely road and single-handedly attempt to clear his name. But it won't be easy. Not only are the police after him, but so are Ripburger's sleazy henchmen. And then there's the Vultures, the Polecats' arch-rivals, who would be more than happy to see Ben fry in the chair.

And, as the game starts, there's another small problem — Ben's bike is

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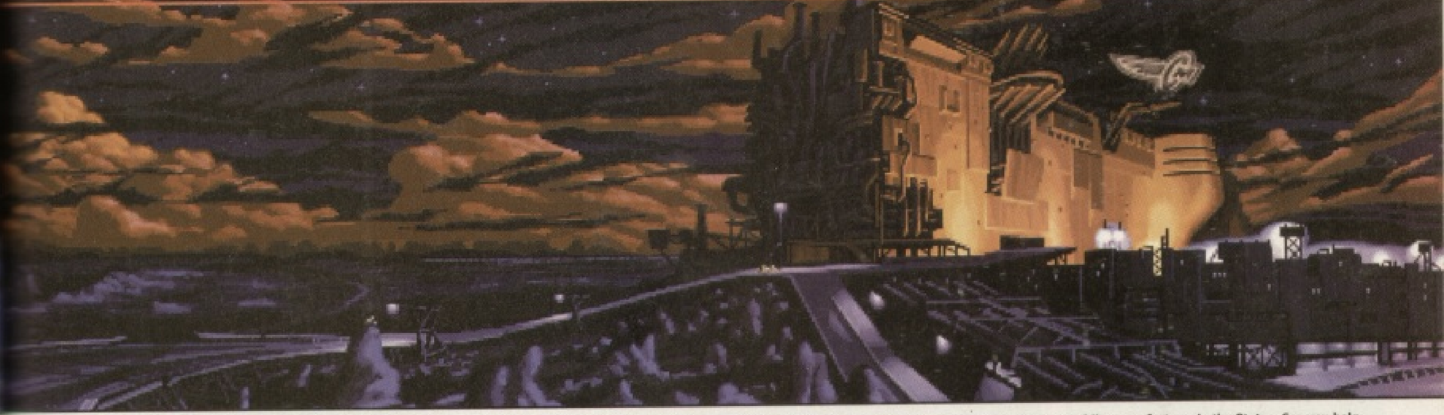
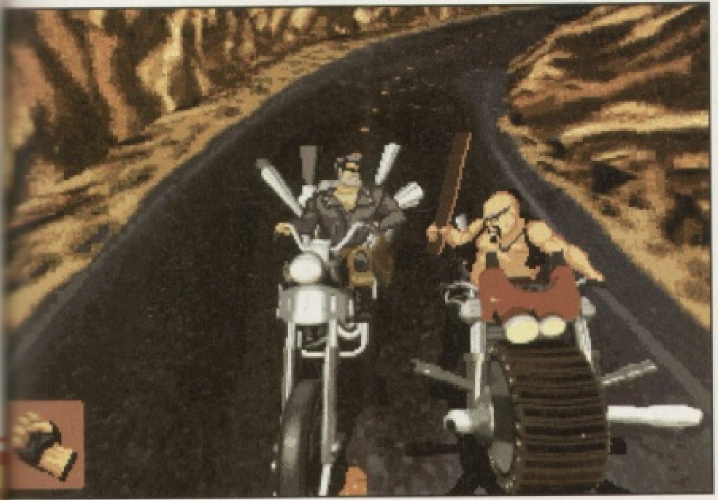
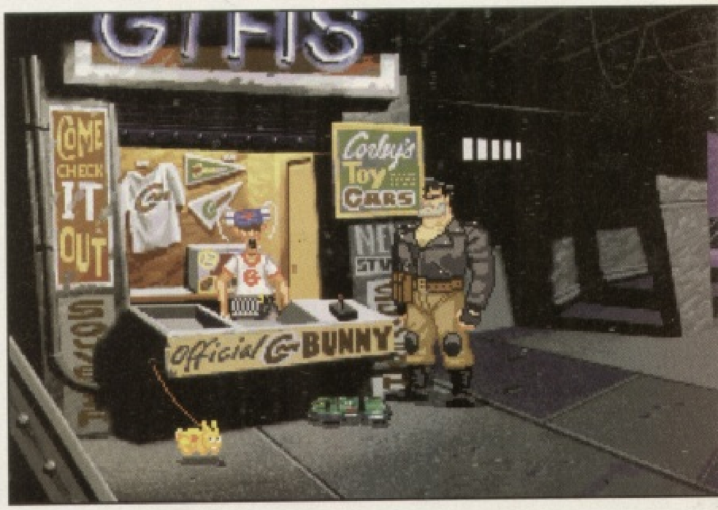
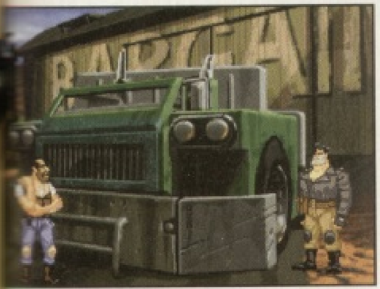


(Below) At certain points in the game Ben has to battle rival bikers on a pre-rendered 3D road. Although these bits may look a little too arcade-y for some, they're actually as puzzle-based as the rest of the game.

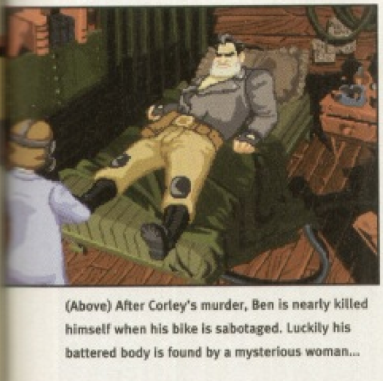
(Above) The Corley Motors factory, home of the last motorbike manufacturer in the States. Can you help Ben prevent it from being turned into a mini-van production line?







(Above) Ben hitches a ride through a police roadblock with a less-than-scrupulous truck driver. As Ben always says, if it ain't got two wheels it ain't to be trusted.



(Above) After Corley's murder, Ben is nearly killed himself when his bike is sabotaged. Luckily his battered body is found by a mysterious woman...

out of commission, thanks to some sabotage work by Ripburger's cronies. And as any biker will tell you, if there's one thing worse than being accused of a crime you didn't commit, it's having your trusty hog off the road. I mean, Ben's a reasonable guy, but you can push him too far...

Full Throttle is easily LucasArts' most accomplished and certainly its most stylish adventure so far. Anyone who knows me will tell you that I'm a fully paid-up member of the Official LucasArts Appreciation Society; frankly, I don't think they have even the faintest *clue* how to create a duff game. But even by their high standards, Full Throttle is incredible.

The graphics, for a start, are simply fabulous; the large character sprites are all drawn in a bold and very distinctive comic-book style, and you can almost taste the dust and feel the searing heat in the largely desert-based locations. The use of beautifully animated cutscenes, of which there are many, is exemplary, helping to push the plot along without ever getting in the way of the game.

The sound is exceptional too. Music is used sparingly but to great effect to increase the atmosphere and heighten tension in the game's key dramatic moments, and the sound effects are just great — the roar of Ben's bike when it first revs up just has to be heard to be believed. There are plenty of neat, subtle touches, too; for example, whenever Ripburger hatches a foul plan, you can always hear a faint crow's squawk in the distance. Neat.

Of course, as Full Throttle is a CD adventure, there's speech throughout the game, and personally I don't think I've ever heard better. LucasArts was one of the pioneers in the use of speech in adventures, and the company's wealth of experience is evident here — all the characters have voices that match their looks perfectly, and the quality of acting is outstanding. Unlike some other 'talkies', you never get the feeling that you're just listening to a bunch of actors reciting lines in a recording studio somewhere (although, of course, that's precisely what you are doing).

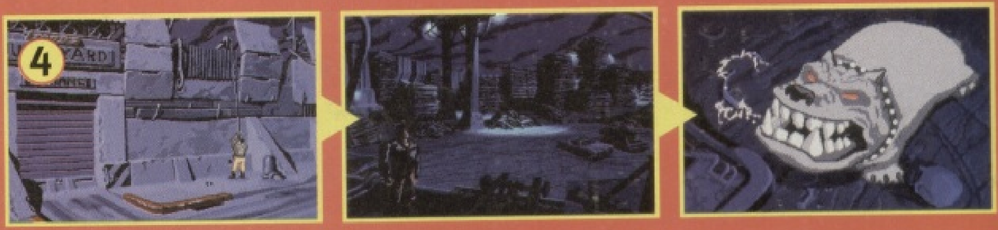
But it's very easy to be fooled by flashy audio-visual trickery, and, as we always say here on PC GAMES with monotonous regularity, it's not graphics and sound that really matter, it's the gameplay. If you haven't got great playability then blah, blah, blah — you must know the rest by now.

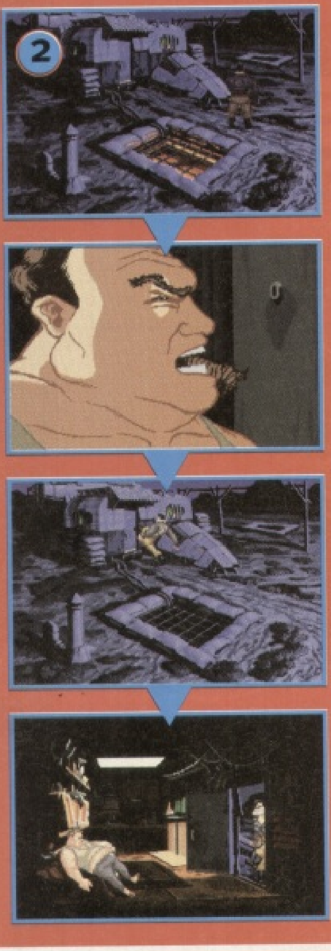
The problem in Full Throttles' case is that this little maxim we live and die by just doesn't hold true — it actually *is* because Full Throttle looks and sounds so good that I've rated it as high as I have. Strip away all the cosmetic frills and you're left with, well, something like Flight Of The Amazon Queen which we reviewed last month — a good, solid point-'n'-click adventure, but nothing you haven't seen before.

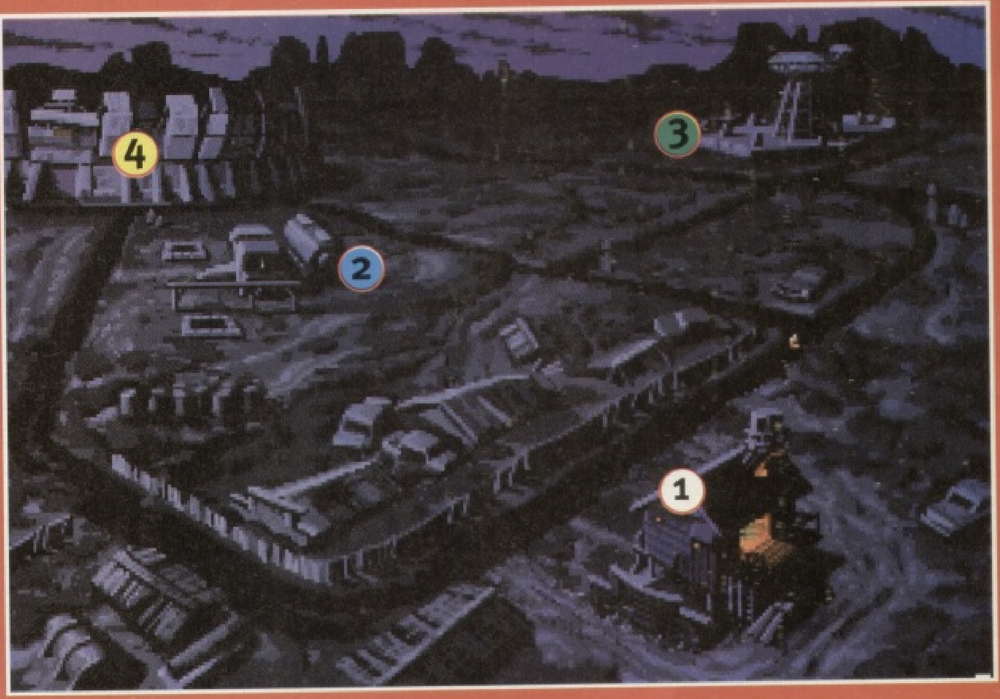
I've A Dream, *Silver Dream Machine...*

Although the mysterious Maureen managed to patch up Ben after his accident, she's not been able to work the same magic on his mangled bike. And without a bike, Ben's got no hope of tracking down Corley's killers. So Ben's first task is to find a blow-torch, some gas and a new set of forks to do the repair work...

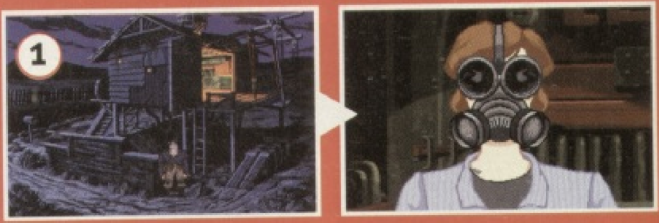
(Below) Mauren unwisely lent her precious blow-torch to the fat guy who lives here, and it seems that he's none too keen on giving it back — he's a metal sculptor, you see, and he needs it to help create his latest work of art. But Ben's not the sort of guy to take 'No' for an answer, so when Mr Arty-Farty comes to the door, Ben gives it a good booting, knocking the fat guy cold. Now, where's that darn blow-torch?



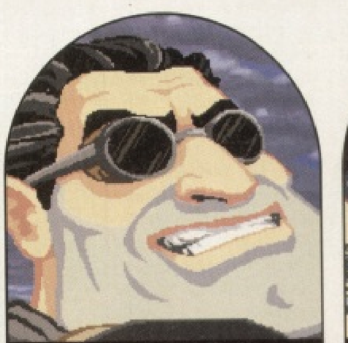




(Right) The enigmatic Maureen lives in a little shack on the edge of town. She's a bit of a whizz at repairing bikes (and severely bashed-up bikers, as it happens) but, even so, she can't work miracles. If Ben's ever going to get back on the road and clear his name, he's going to have to do some serious adventuring and puzzle-solving first to get all the gear that he needs to repair the bike.

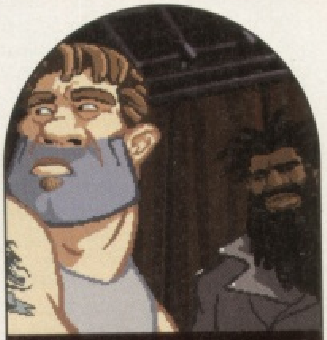


The Boys (And Girl) Are Back In Town



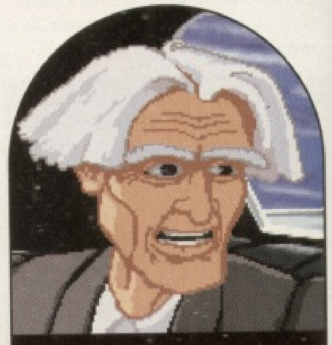
Ben

Ben is a man on a mission — to clear his good name after being falsely accused of murder!



The Polecats

Ben's loyal gang of bikers are also implicated in the crime, and spend most of the game in prison.



Corley

Corley, the owner of Corley Motors, is the tragic murder victim. It's sad when they die so young...

en able to work
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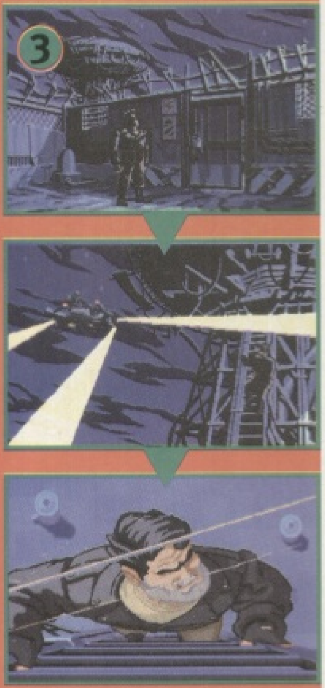
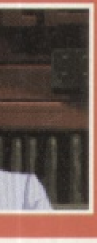
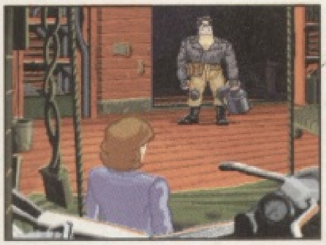
repair work...

(Left) There's sure to be a decent set of forks in the junkyard — but the first problem is how to get in! Luckily, a bit of crafty lateral thinking soon solves that little conundrum. Now there's a rather more serious obstacle to overcome — the junkyard is guarded by a vicious, snarling dog, and it looks *very* hungry! Hang on, what was that Ben saw in the freezer back at the fat artist's place...?

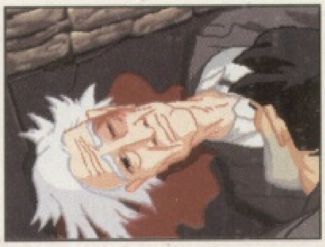


(Above) The gasoline tower contains enough juice to power a thousand bikes. But while it's easy enough getting inside the fuel dump itself, getting to the actual gas is another matter entirely — the ladder to the top of the tower is alarmed, and as soon as Ben touches it the police come flying over to investigate, guns a-blazing. Looks like this ain't going to be as easy as Ben thought...

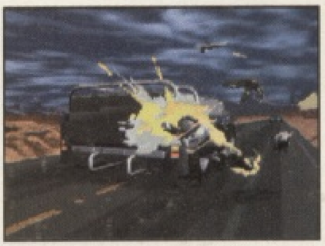




"Hey, honey — I gotta little present for ya!" "Oh gee, Ben, you're so romantic. It's just what I always wanted — a can full of gasoline!"



Biker Ben witnesses Corley's moving and highly-emotional death scene. If you don't blub here, your heart must be made of stone.



There are easier ways to take out the Cavefish, but none that are quite so spectacular as ramming them with your truck.

Oh, LucasArts have made efforts to do a few things a little differently. The player interface, for example, is quite clever and unobtrusive — basically the mouse pointer highlights any objects that can be interacted with, and then by holding down the right mouse button you can bring up the mandatory action icon panel. The good thing about this, basically, is that for the most part the screen is left clear and uncluttered.

(Incidentally, talking about the player interface, I was pleased to see that LucasArts has returned to the old 'multiple-choice' conversation system. Although Sam & Max Hit The Road was a great game, I was never a big fan of its vague 'talk about a topic' system because I didn't really feel that I was in control of the conversations.)

Then there are occasional sections where Ben's on the road, battling rival bikers on a pre-rendered 3D highway. Although these sequences may look a little too arcade-like for most adventurers' tastes, they're actually quite simple to play. And they're still puzzle-based, because success doesn't come from fast reactions but from using the right weapons on the right opponents.

But despite all this, Full Throttle is still yer conventional point-'n'-click adventure at heart. Admittedly, the tone of the game is slightly different to previous LucasArts' games — unlike Guybrush Threepwood or Bernard, Ben isn't adverse to using brawn when brains won't work — but essentially the gameplay still revolves around wandering between locations, solving puzzles by using objects with other objects, and talking to people to get clues.

And as adventures go, Full Throttle is very good. The plot is excellent, twisting and turning and full of surprises. The characters are very engaging, too — you really care about Ben's plight, and there's a genuine urge to help him clear his name. In general the puzzles aren't *too* tough so I doubt whether the game will take that long to complete, although there were a couple of situations that had me stumped for *ages*.

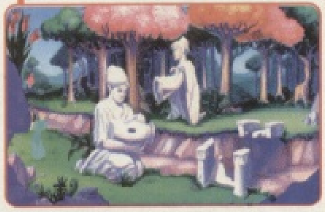
But while there are tougher adventures available, there are none that have Full Throttle's superb atmosphere. It wouldn't matter to me if Full Throttle could be completed in a day — I'd still rate it highly, because as a gaming experience it has no equal. And it's all down to the brilliant use of graphics and sound, which elevate Full Throttle from being just another adventure into the realm of 'interactive movie'.

Actually, 'interactive movie' is not right, because it conjures up images of badly digitised actors (or should that be 'digitised bad actors') shuffling about in front of crummy computer-generated backdrops. No, a more apt term would be 'interactive cartoon', although one more in the mould of something like Akira rather than Disney's sugary fare.

I really enjoyed Full Throttle. It's yet another feather for LucasArts to add to its already over-adorned cap — these guys are so far ahead of the pack when it comes to creating top-notch adventures, they're out of sight. If a better game, let alone adventure, comes along this year, I'll eat my leathers. Until Full Throttle 2 comes along, I'll be on the road with Ben and the Polecats. See you there...

It's a bit like...

...King's Quest VII. Like Full Throttle, King's Quest VII is an attempt to create an 'interactive cartoon' — and a very successful one at that. However, it's a touch too easy to complete, and as a cartoon it's very much like the sort of thing Disney would produce — slick and glossy, but sentimental and occasionally twee. It's a matter of taste, but I'd rather rough 'n' tumble with Ben than skip alongside Rosella.



FULL THROTTLE^CD

LucasArts/In-house
(0181) 960 2255
£TBA Out Now

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 486, VGA, 8Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Pro Audio Spectrum and Roland soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Excellent characters and intriguing plot combine to produce a first-rate graphic adventure.
- The cartoonish graphics are wonderful and the speech is superbly acted.
- Ben has to rank as the coolest game hero ever created!

...AND THE BAD

- The 'riding on the road' bits are less than satisfying.
- The puzzles are not that tough.

Overall

95%

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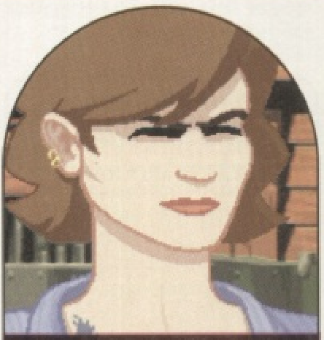
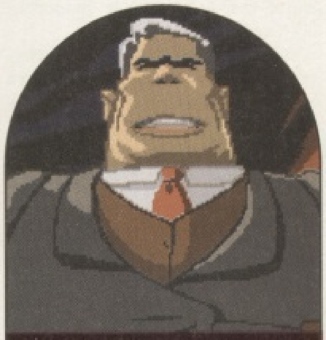


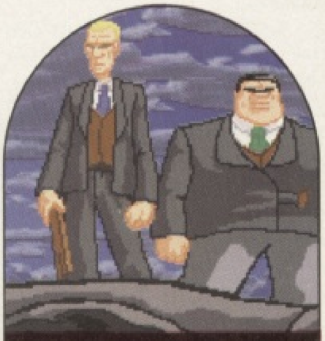
Maureen

Maureen (shame about the name) helps Ben in his quest. But why is she so coy about her past?



Ripburger

Ripburger is the villain of the piece. He's the real murderer and the man who framed Ben. Sod.



The Henchmen

Ripburger's two evil cronies are the Laurel and Hardy of crime, but not half as funny.

cd updates

Let's be 'aving you then! Alex Simmons takes a gander at the latest batch of old floppy games that have had the full multimedia wash-'n'-brush-up.

The Clue!^{CD}

The Clue! is an adventure game with a difference. Rather than being the obligatory Mr Nice Guy who's out to right wrongs, in Neo Software's adventure you're actually a thief looking to steal everything that isn't nailed down! A bit different from the sickeningly nice King's Quest games, eh?

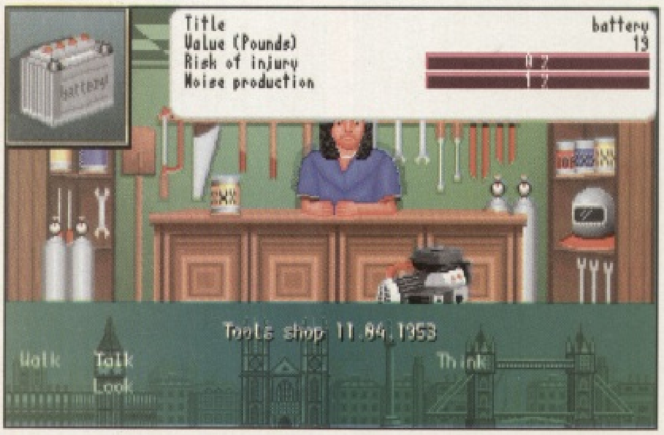
Even stranger, when the game begins you're actually dead. As your coffin, surrounded by grief-stricken family and friends, is sealed and lowered into the ground, you're treated to an autobiography that slowly reveals the life story of the late Matt Stuvysant — although this time round, you make the decisions.

Arriving in London to seek fame and fortune, Matt's initial money-making plans are small, limited to doing over newspaper stands and ice cream stalls. Before you can actually commit the evil deed, though, a great deal of groundwork must be done. The joint should be checked out for security measures, tools must be bought and fellow gang members hired to make sure the raid runs smoothly.

Obviously things get progressively more difficult as you undertake more ambitious jobs, and when jewellers shops and bank vaults become the centre of Matt's attention, security guards must be drugged and complex alarm systems deactivated before he can finally stash the cash.

Visually this CD version of The Clue! is virtually identical to the original floppy game, the only significant difference between the two being the digitised speech that features throughout. The dialogue is a tad stereotypical, but aside from that it's not too bad at all.

While The Clue! isn't the most visually impressive game ever, it's still very enjoyable — mainly because it's one of the few game that actually allows you to do something *bad* for a change! We like that, we do.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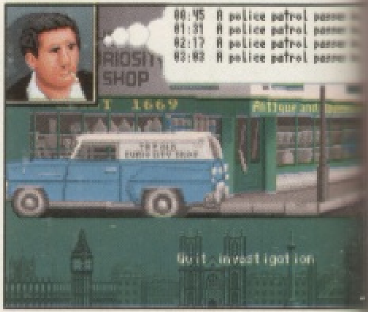
Value (Pounds) 13
Risk of injury
Noise production

Tools shop 11.04.1953


00:45 A police patrol
01:31 A police patrol
02:17 A police patrol
03:03 A police patrol

KOMPART/NEO SOFTWARE

(01438) 840004

£29.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; joystick; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Thunderboard soundcards.

Overall 79%

Nick Faldo's Golf Deluxe^{CD}

Despite the surprising similarity between the majority of computer-based golf games currently doing the rounds, they're still remarkably popular and sell by the absolute bucketload. Now, many years after the release of the pioneering Leaderboard, golf sims are still appearing their droves — and in the latest batch is Grandslam's decidedly average Nick Faldo's Golf.

Using a standard behind-the-golfer viewpoint, this enhanced CD version features two 18-hole courses plus the obligatory practice session in which Faldo himself offers you advice on how to play the best shot to escape from a sand trap, and so on.

Up to four golfers can compete simultaneously either in stroke or match play and compete during either spring, summer or winter, with the season determining the type of weather conditions and therefore the flightpath of the ball.

Before you actually step out onto the fairway, though, you're treated to a brief summary of the course, accompanied by a neat fly-by that picks out the sands traps and other obstacles leading up to the pin.

Standing at the tee, taking a shot is much the same as any other PC golf game — simply click the mouse button to start the power bar moving, press a second time to choose the power of the shot and once more to determine hook and slice. As the ball flies off into the distance, along with the customary 'thwack' as the club strikes home, it's all too easy to notice how disappointing Nick Faldo's looks.

While the character sprite is okay (although the stripey trousers have sadly been forgotten), the courses are grainy and sparse. Worse, the ball occasionally disappears mid-flight. This makes it very difficult to judge the path of the ball, and left me feeling I wasn't entirely in control of the shot.

The choice of stance, as well as the selection of clubs, helps to rectify this problem to some extent, but still Nick Faldo's Golf has neither the gripping gameplay or the graphical finesse of rival golf games, particularly the vastly superior Links 386, to keep armchair golfers interested.

GRANDSLAM/CLIMAX

(0181) 680 7044

£34.99 OUT NOW

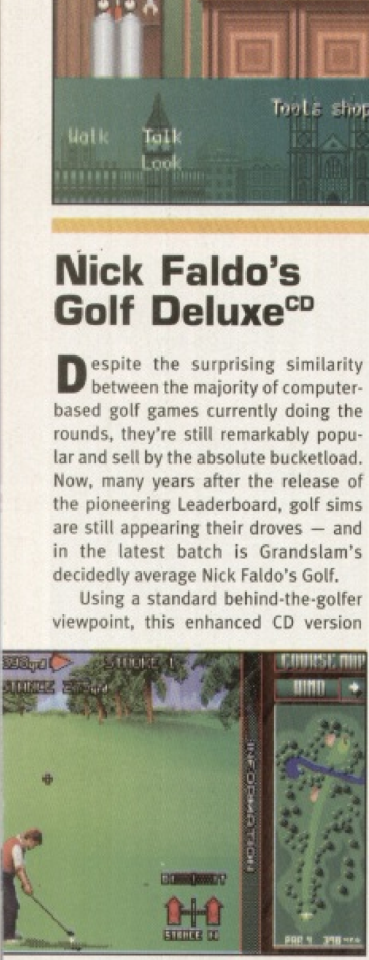
MINIMUM SPEC

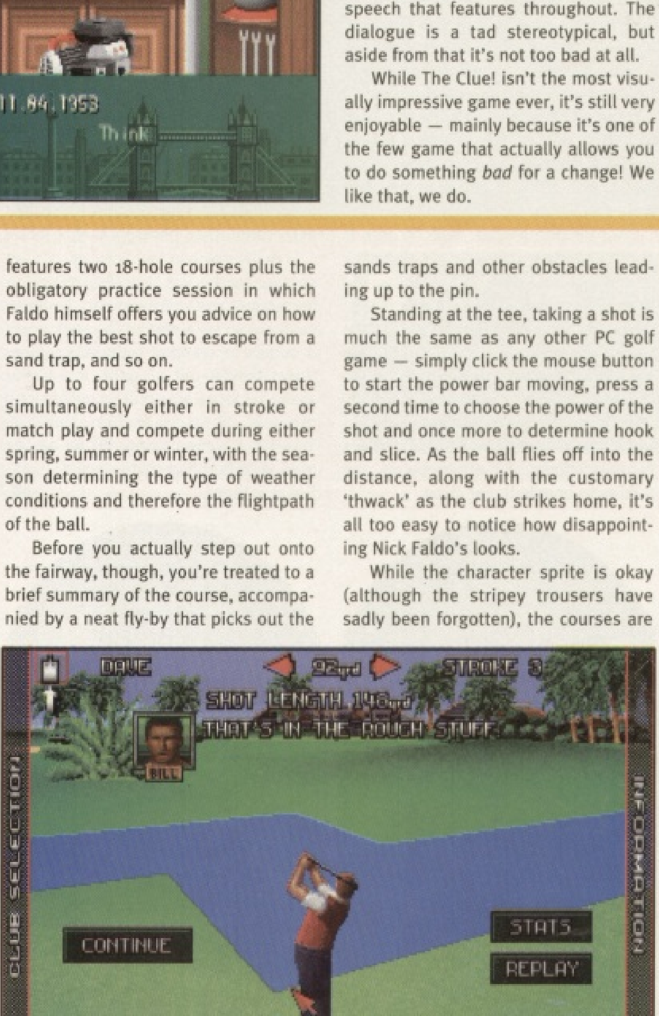
25MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster and Gravis UltraSound soundcards.

Overall 66%

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Budget Reviews

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Award Winners Platinum Edition^{CD}

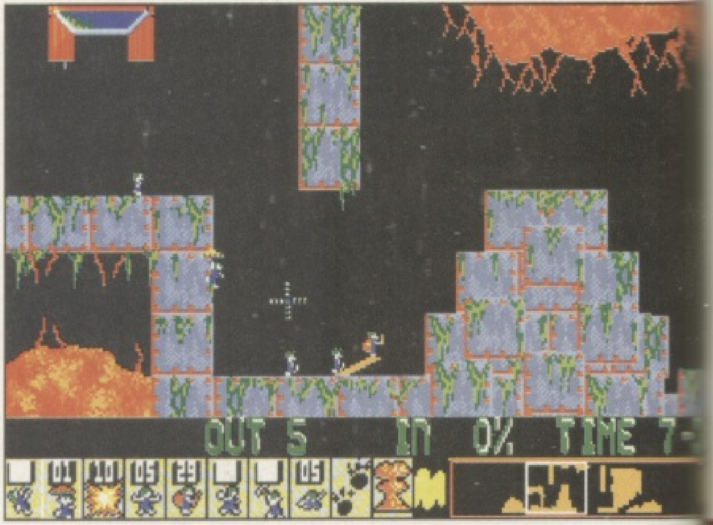
If you're new to the PC scene, compilations are usually an excellent way of stocking up on classic games. Empire has traditionally lead the way with its Award Winners series and this, the third (we think), continues the tradition, containing three top games that should be in everyone's collection.

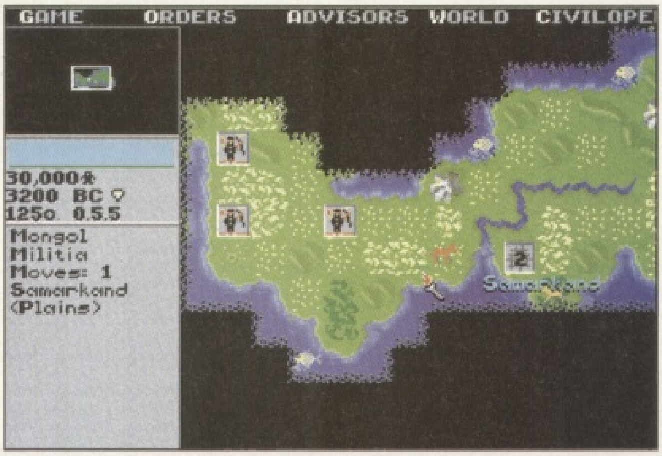
Frontier: Elite II leads the way, and is probably one of the best space trading games available on any format. The original's format has been emulated many times, but the classic mix of adventuring, trading and fighting has never been bettered — except, perhaps, in this sequel.

A labour of love by creator David Braben, this epic could quite easily replace normal life. It's an open-ended game, with no beginning or end — there's an almost limitless number of missions, each of which can take days or weeks to complete. There's no goal as such; just scrape a living as a trader, mercenary or a combination of both, buying and selling goods and weapons to make a healthy profit — with which you can do more of the same.

Your actions within the game's universe affect how others treat you. Go about your business peacefully and the space police will show no interest, but start blowing people up and you can expect a more hostile reception. Fans of the original lapped this up, while newcomers to the Elite way of life have been equally enthusiastic. A true classic.

The same could be said about Lemmings, DMA Design's puzzler that single-handedly invented a genre. It's a unique blend of puzzle-solving and arcade action, and one that proved so successful it's hard to name a format not to have its own conversion.





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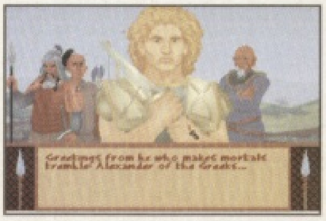
The idea here is fiendishly simple: just guide the required number of tiny suicidal rodents to the safety of the level exit, and you can progress to the next puzzle. You do this by giving the lemmings new skills that enable them to bypass the various fatal obstacles that litter the scrolling landscapes.

The graphics, though cute in a cheesy kind of way, aren't exactly earth-shatteringly, but Lemmings is so playable that even the most impressive visuals couldn't add anything to it. Yet another 'must have'.

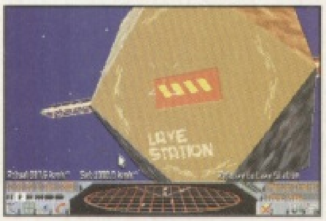
Finally comes Civilization, Sid Meier's classic (that word again) empire-building extravaganza. The game casts you in the role of the ruler of an entire civilisation through many different generations. The idea here is simply to exist for as many centuries as possible, from 4000 or so years before the birth of Christ until present day and beyond, perhaps colonising space along the way (if you can be bothered).

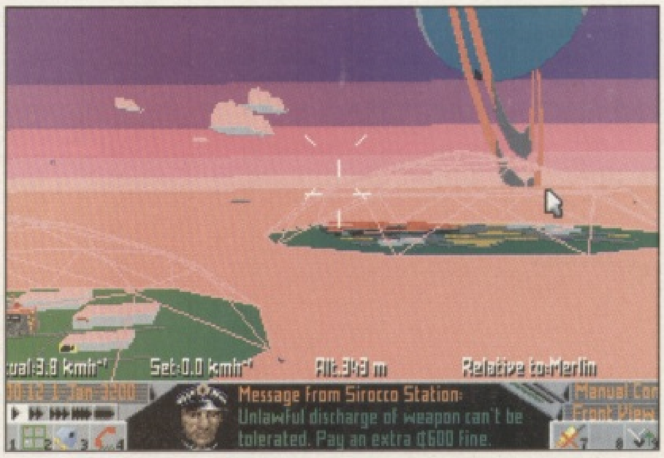
While Civilization is possibly the least immediately accessible game in this compilation, it's certainly the most engrossing — a couple of hours spent working out the game mechanics is a good investment, as you'll be playing this for years to come.

Award Winners Platinum is a perfect trio of games, and an ideal star to anyone's collection. Even if you do already own Lemmings in one of its many guises, this collection represents fantastic value for money.



Greetings from he who maket mortals tremble: Alexander of the Greeks...





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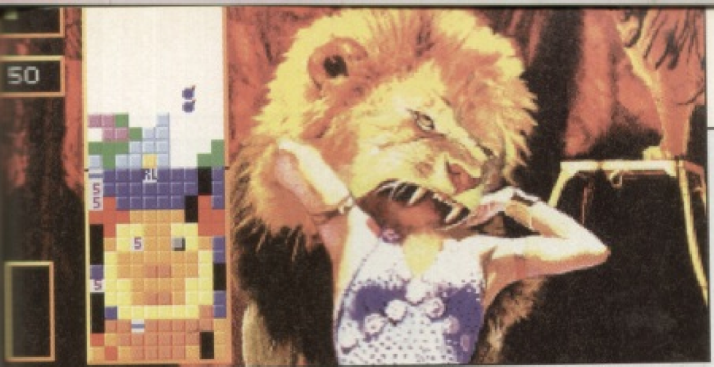
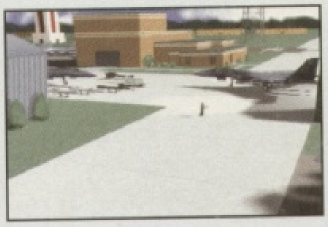
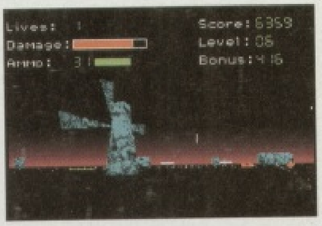






Power Game III^{CD}

On paper, Activision's new Power Game III compilation looks like something extra-special. In reality, however, it's absolute crap, doo-doo, ka-ka, plops... well, you've probably got the picture by now. You see, while the likes of F-15 Strike Eagle III, Spectre and Super Tetris may sound like great games, only a triple-pack compilation featuring, say, Plumbers Don't Wear Ties, along with Plumbers Don't Wear Ties 2 and — yes, you guessed right! — Plumbers Don't Wear Ties 3 would be any worse.

The F-15 games once wore the PC flight sim crown. They were in-depth, exciting and, at the time, state-of-the-art. Now, though, they've long been superseded by just about everything else, and this, the third in the once-classic series, leaves something of a sour taste in the mouth. It looks pretty enough when it's not moving, but jet off into the wide blue yonder and the garish, primary-coloured graphics start to jerky horribly all over the screen. Even on a half-decent machine the update is embarrassingly poor, making the will to delve deeper into the game virtually non-existent.

F-15 Strike Eagle III fails both as a serious sim or a fast 3D shoot-'em-up. It's not deep enough to cater for most avid flight fans, while the sparse landscapes — populated by not very much at all — make for some extremely boring flying sessions.

Spectre started life as an Apple Macintosh game, and as most of our design work is done on those machines, the network option proved to be a real time-waster. Sadly, as a stand-alone PC title, it's more than a little stinky. Graphically, it's not up to scratch. Simple polygons drift smoothly around the screen and the frame rate is more than adequate, but the whole thing looks far too dated, especially in these texture-mapped days.

These would be excusable if the game was anything to shout about, but it's not. Spectre is essentially a very shallow shoot-'em-up that centres around destroying simple enemy craft and moving on to the next level, and this proves to be far too tedious to be worth bothering with. Sure, the network and modem options inject some degree of longevity into the proceedings, but not enough to save this from being a waste of hard disk space. Play Spectre at work, if at all possible.

The adage "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" is one we constantly quote, and Super Tetris is no exception to this rule. The original Tetris remains one of the best puzzlers on any format, but this 'sequel' tries too hard to improve on what didn't need improving, proving once again what a commercially-driven market this is. If you're after a decent Tetris clone, check out the Public Domain libraries as most offer something miles more playable than this.

Right from the start, Power Game III wreaks of nastiness. The installation routine is tacky and the packaging dire. Perhaps compilations like the Award Winners series have lead us to expect too much from software bundles. I don't know. But one thing's for sure: the compilation scene is a worse place thanks to this pile of rubbish.

Activision/Various

(0181) 742 9400

£TBA Out Now

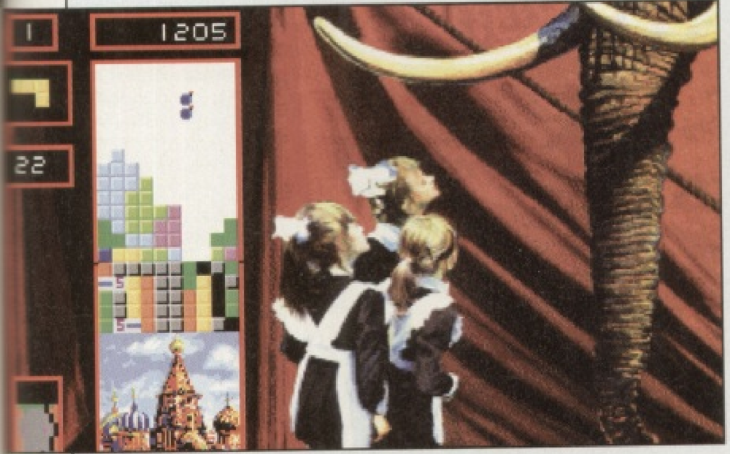
MINIMUM **SPEC**

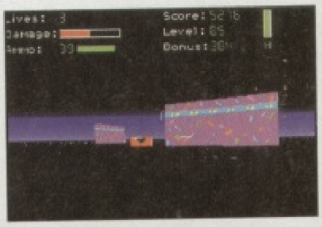
33MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive and 13Mb of hard disk space.

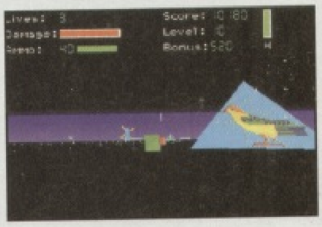
ALSO **SUPPORTS**

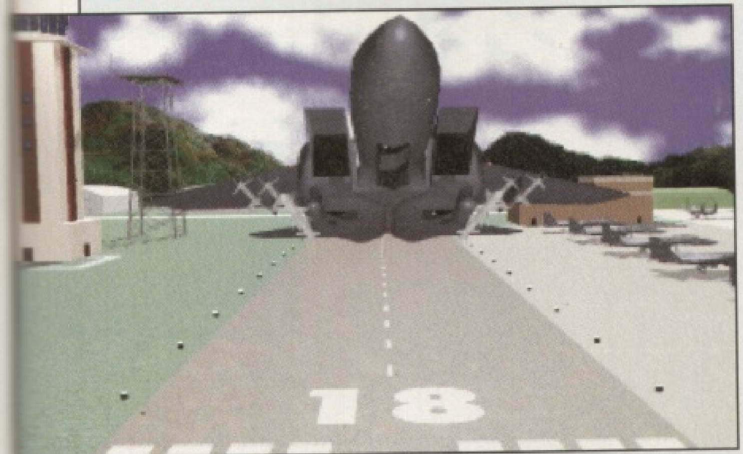
Mouse; joystick; Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

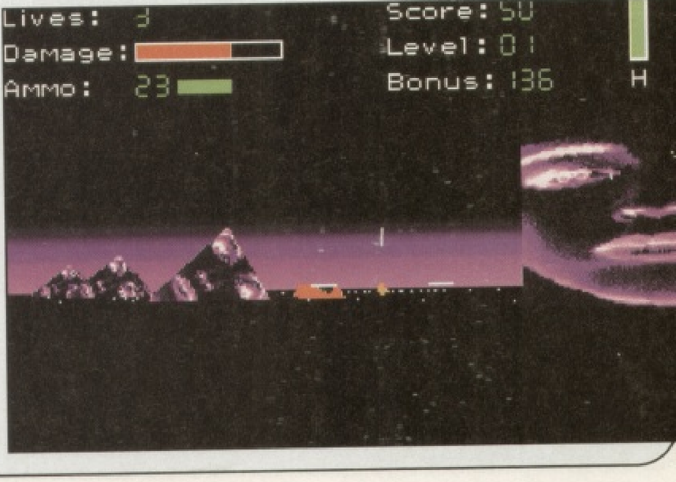
Overall 23%

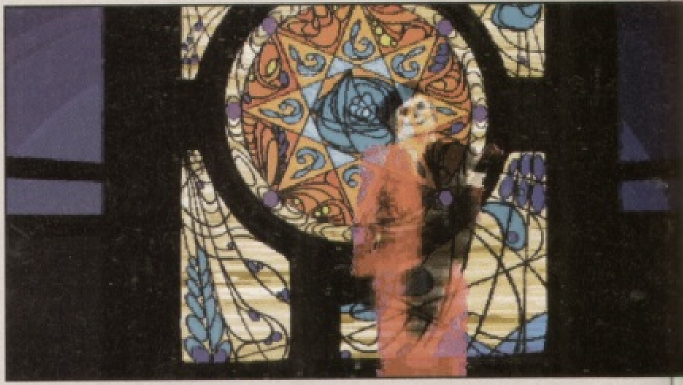












Temptation^CD

CD compilations are usually several floppy games on one disc, providing a cost-efficient medium for publishers to package several titles for relatively little cost. After all, one CD is considerably cheaper than ten or eleven disks. While this is no bad thing, it's nice to see someone doing things properly for a change. That someone is Virgin, and the compilation Temptation — a mouth-watering bundle that contains four genuine CD games in one heavy package.

7th Guest was the first true CD-only game, combining breath-taking rendered visuals, full-motion video, adventuring and puzzle solving. Compared to the recent releases like Ecstatica and Little Big Adventure, 7th Guest may prove to be a tad too linear for most, but those that like a bit of puzzle solving served alongside their adventuring will be more than at home here.

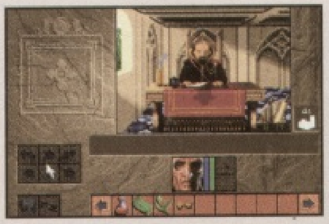
The story takes place in the mansion of the master toy maker Henry Stauf, which plays host to some pretty horrific events. Mutilated bodies, limb-chopping and all kinds of nastiness abound, making 7th Guest an adult-only game if ever there was one.

Lands Of Lore was Westwood Studios second foray into the Dungeon Master world, and its experience with the Eye Of The Beholder series, which the American developer produced several years before this, is evident here. An atmospheric intro sets the scene, and then it's into the game proper — a 3D world populated by over 50 intelligent monsters and loads of migraine-inducing puzzles. This will keep adventurers happy for months to come.

Hand Of Fate, the sequel to Legend Of Kyrandia, is a point-'n'-click adventure that mixes humour with puzzle solving to produce a very enjoyable romp. As Xanthia, your job is simple: to stop an evil curse from wiping out the land you love. Brilliant visuals and entertaining characters immediately impress, while the subtleties of the game's spell mixing soon grab you by the ears and refuse to let go. This is a worthy sequel to Legend Of Kyrandia, with the only drawback being the absence of Malcolm, the thoroughly evil jester that made the first game such a laugh.

Finally, for all you speed freaks out there, comes IndyCar (complete with its Track Pack), the brilliant driving sim that some reckon is still better than NASCAR. There's something about IndyCar racing that makes for an exhilarating racer — perhaps it's the simple tracks, or the fact that Our Nige did so well in his first season. Whatever, adrenaline-junkies will take to this like no-one's business. The only drawback is that you need a high-end PC to enjoy Indycar at its best. But, hey, that's the price of progress.

Overall, Temptation is a top compilation, with something to offer everyone. And at this price, you you'd be stupid to miss such an opportunity to pick up four great games for less than a full-price release.



VIRGIN/IN-HOUSE

(0181) 960 2255

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, SVGA, 2Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive, 10Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; supports all major soundcards.

Overall 90%

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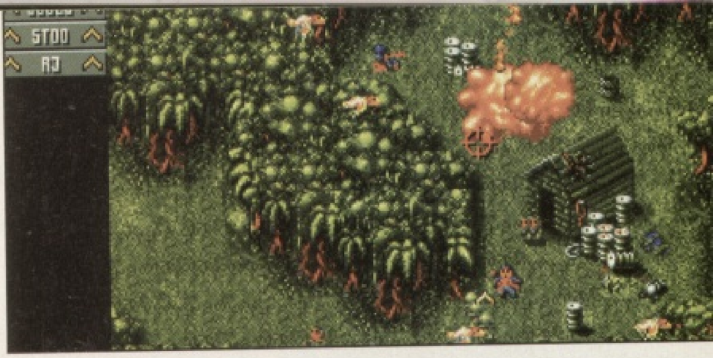
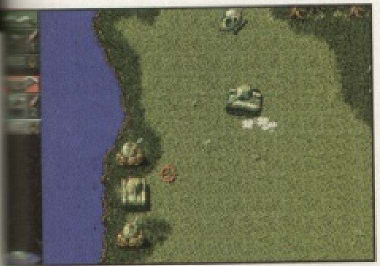


Cannon Fodder

Anyone strolling down Fleet Street 18 months ago would have heard cries of "Outrage!" and "Obscene!", as uneducated hacks discovered the existence of Cannon Fodder. The media was at the time waging a very real war against video games, so the arrival of Sensible Software's shoot-'em-up 'glorifying' violence generated miles of column inches as proper journalists lashed out at its apparent 'War Is Fun' message. Sadly, they missed the point: Cannon Fodder is pure escapism, and nothing more. It's also bloody brilliant — literally!



Okay, so the premise isn't the most sophisticated around. There's no plot to speak of, no real mission objective to strive for — the idea here is simply to blow away all the enemy troops and buildings, using whatever firepower you can muster.

But what Cannon Fodder lacks in background detail, it makes up for in gameplay. Like Lemmings (reviewed elsewhere), the control method is beautiful — one mouse button moves the troops, the other fires. This simplicity enables you to concentrate on the game, rather than wrestle with icons, and makes the experience all the more enjoyable.

The early levels lead you into a false sense of security as, come Mission 6, you'll be thrown head-first into some of the most cunning booby traps and most relentless assaults ever to appear in a computer game. The learning curve is steep but never frustratingly so. Unlike Cannon Fodder 2, things never prove to be impossibly difficult — with a bit of thought, strategies can be formed and victory moves ever closer.

Ultimately, Cannon Fodder is something of a computer game rarity. Deceptively fiendish but immediately playable — and a worth purchase for any self-respecting games fan.

The Hit Squad/Virgin
(0161) 832 6633
£14.99 Out Now

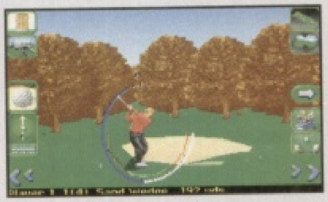
MINIMUM SPEC
25MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM, 4Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

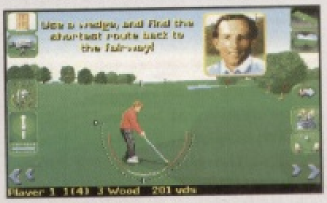
ALSO SUPPORTS
Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall 90%

David Leadbetter's Golf

Golf simulations are generally difficult to tell apart. Like all good genres, it's often the case that one title becomes so popular that following releases emulate it to some degree. David Leadbetter's Golf is a good example of this; it's a competent simulation, but place this and any other half-decent golf game side by side and it would be difficult to tell them apart.




Use a wedge, and find the shortest route back to the fairway!
Player 1 1(4) 3 Wood 201 yds

That said, it's hard to fault in any area. The visuals are lovely and shift at a fair old rate — but then, it would be bloody hard to cock-up what is essentially a load of green polygons and a few tree shapes. The game uses the now standard control system (you know; click once for power, again to hook or slice) and the all the required options are present and correct.

Indeed, once you get into the game, it becomes little more than a simple reaction test, as most of the options are selected automatically (although you can, of course, override the computer's natural selection). While this feature should appeal to golf novices, it does take the challenge out of the game.

It's difficult to fault DLG as it's perfect budget fodder. There are plenty of courses, nice incidental effects and the whole thing is presented nicely. While it may not have anything new or innovative to make it stand out from the crowd, it's a solid and well-programmed simulation that should appeal to arcade and golf fans alike.

PowerPlus/MicroProse
(01276) 684959
£16.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPEC
25MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM and 8Mb of hard disk space.

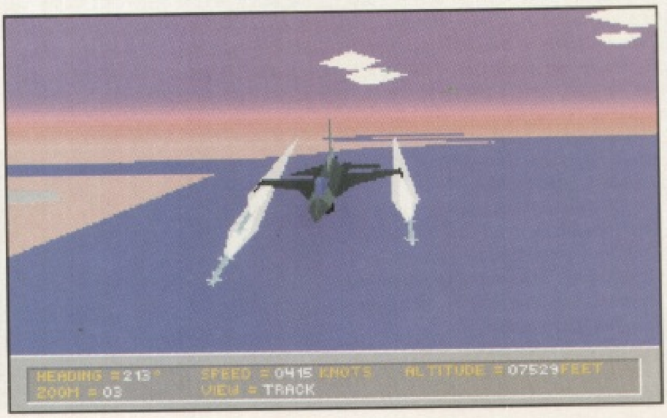
ALSO SUPPORTS
Mouse; joystick; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall 84%

Falcon 3.0

Having just sat through the God-awful F-15 Strike Eagle III, I was not exactly salivating at the thought of reappraising another old flight simulator. So it came as some surprise to discover that Falcon 3.0 is pretty ace — if you forgive its graphical shortcomings, you're in for a treat.

I'll come clean before I go on: up until now I hadn't played any of the Falcon games, so had no idea of what to expect. Falcon 3.0 is getting on for four years old now, so I thought shoddy presentation and cheesy graphics would be the soup of the day. And although when compared to 1995's simulations, the visuals are a tad sparse, they move fluidly enough to convey the action.



It's all very friendly. The manual is initially off-putting, but the reference cards and quick start options are all you really need to get into the thick of things. There are plenty of external views, different cameras and assorted levels of play — indeed, far too many features to list here. Suffice it to say, you can't fault Falcon 3.0 in any department and stay fashionable.

If you broke Falcon 3.0 down into individual components, you could name a title that has done each better. But as a whole the game hangs together nicely. Unlike the other budget flight sim release this month, there's something for everyone, be it the serious simulation fan or action-orientated gamer. And for this price, you can't ask for much more than that.

Current Squadron:
None
Current Theater:
None

PowerPlus/MicroProse
(01276) 684959
£16.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPEC
25MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM and 12Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS
Mouse; joystick; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall 80%

Yours... for

Haven't got enough cash to fork out for the latest Interactive Movie from ExpensiveSoft?
Alex Simmons scours the land of Shareware and finds a bundle of cheap alternatives.

3D Pitfall

J. Shramco

Before you get too excited, this isn't a 3D Doom-style conversion of Activision's classic Atari VCS platform. In fact, it's something a lot less exciting. It is (cue drum roll)... yet another bloody variation on the done-to-death falling blocks/Tetris theme.

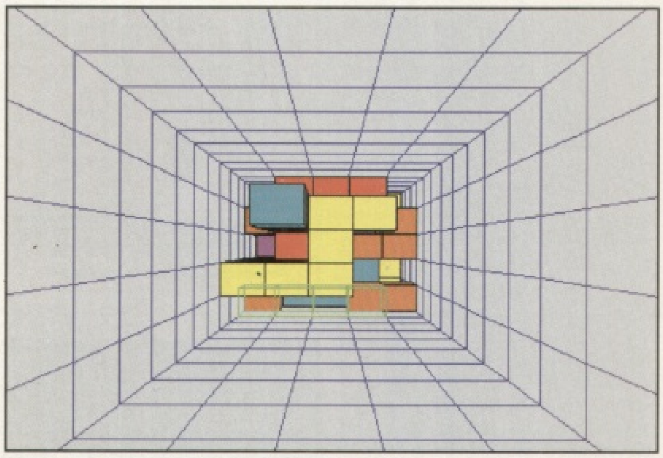
What's worse, 3D Pitfall boasts little, if any, originality, and I have no doubt that you'll have seen countless games of this type before. Let's be honest, a 3D Tetris game is hardly groundbreaking, is it?

For the sake of those unfamiliar with Tetris (is there anyone?), the basic aim of the game is to guide the coloured shapes so they efficiently fill the screen without leaving any horrid gaps. Complete a line and it'll disappear, allowing you to continue. This is essentially the idea here, but rather than just rotating the blocks, now you can flip them, spin them and so on... get the general idea?

Although 3D Pitfall is bright, vibrant and colourful, it's all been done before, and it's been done better, too. Personally I'm still a great fan of the original Tetris - it's great, and to be brutally honest anything that doesn't improve on it (and 3D Pitfall doesn't) isn't really worth bothering with.

- **Contact: Transend (01274) 622228.**

OVERALL 63%



Rats!

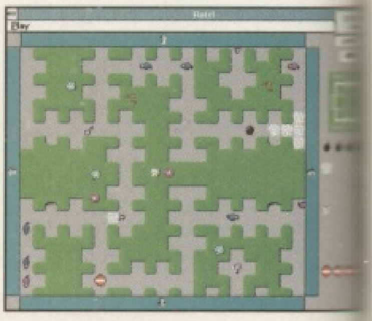
Sean O'Conner

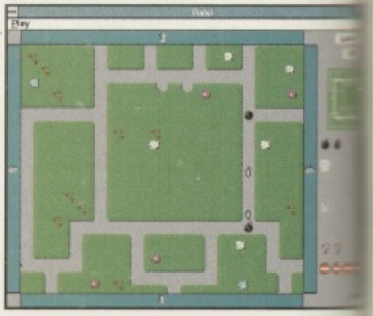
Has anyone played the console smash Bomberman? If not, why not? Let me explain that it's a brilliantly addictive strategy/arcade action combo in which five Legomen stomp around, blowing the crap out of each other with an infinite supply of time bombs. It's simple, but great fun.

Rats! is similar to this, although here bombs are used to control the ever-growing rodent problem in the city's sewers. The damn rats are obviously on heat as they're multiplying like rabbits, and within seconds swarms of the long-toothed rodents are scuttling through the maze-like tunnels and pipes, spreading disease like wildfire and generally causing havoc.

After a quick wham, bam, thank-you ma'am, the blue males and the pink female rats spawn a grey infant, and it's these nippy buggers that are difficult corner. You are only awarded a bomb every few seconds, so they must be strategically placed to take out as many of the creatures as possible.

There are other bonuses with which to fight the plague-carrying beasts, including stop signs which can be used to cage in the rats, making the task of wiping them out much easier. There is also poisoned bait, gender-changing icons (that prevent the rats from mating) and even highly-unstable radioactive canisters that nuke everything in the immediate vicinity!





Featuring a meagre six levels, I very much doubt if Rats! will keep you amused for more than a couple of hours. What's more, it doesn't look particularly brilliant either and runs quite slowly. However, it's quite playable and is a fairly enjoyable Windows-based game - not bad for a couple of quid.

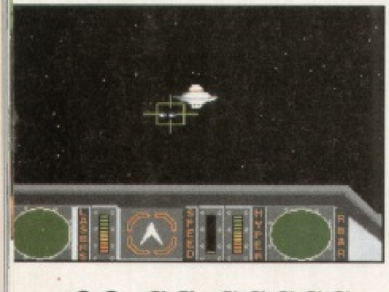
- **Contact: Transend (01274) 620536.**

OVERALL 72%

Blasteroids 3D

Element Software

Shareware libraries and bulletin boards are brimming over with Asteroid clones. And occasionally they even spread across to the full-price market — Bloodhouse's Stardust, for example, is essentially the same old Atari game, but with numerous graphical enhancements and the odd power-up to bring it up into the 90s.



Blasteroids 3D is, as the name suggests, a variation on the classic theme, although the customary top-down view is replaced by a sprawling three-dimensional starfield packed with tumbling asteroids and shiny UFOs that buzz erratically through space.

The aim of the game remains unchanged: destroy the asteroids to progress to the next level. The asteroids appear in the ship's viewscreen, and also on the front and rear scanners which allows you to predict which direction they're coming from.

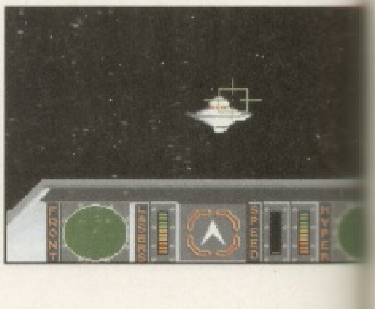
As ever, each time you manage to hit one with the laser (a difficult task, mainly because of the awkward controls) it splits in two until the smaller rocks are eventually destroyed. As well as dodging the occasional space boulder, you're constantly under attack from the alien craft too which fire off streams of laser fire that is tremendously hard to avoid.

Of course, your ship is equipped with shields and a hyper-jump drive, but the protective force-field wears out all-too-soon and limited engine power prevents you from warping out of every single sticky situation.

While Blasteroids 3D is a novel approach to the classic game, it's dogged by ridiculously difficult gameplay and basic graphics. If you're looking for a decent Asteroids game you won't find it here — just a substandard blast instead.

- **Contact: Transend (01274) 620536.**

OVERALL 54%



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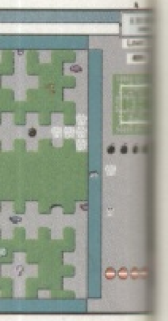

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XFortress

Something Software

A lot of the games you'll find in Shareware libraries and on bulletin boards look frighteningly archaic but are surprisingly good fun to play. XFortress in one of them, and is best described as 'Round' Tetris.

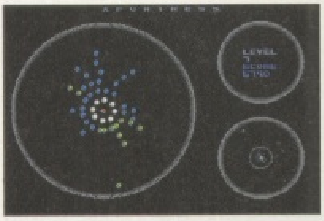
The plot behind the game is irrelevant, but it explains why rocks cascade down the screen rather than coloured blocks. In the centre of the screen is a fortress and surrounding the castle is the unseen enemy who constantly hurls rocks at the tower walls. To cut a not-so-long story even shorter, the boulders gradually build up around the walls until they knock it down.

This is where you come in, rotating the castle (don't ask me how) so the rocks create an complete circle around the castle and thus disappear. Reminiscent of Tetris, I think you'll agree. A long-range scanner provides a means of actually predicting where the rocks will next appear.

With four difficulty levels, ranging from easy-peasy to 'rock' hard (groan), XFortress is simple yet playable enough to keep you coming back for more.

● **Contact: Transend (01274) 622228.**

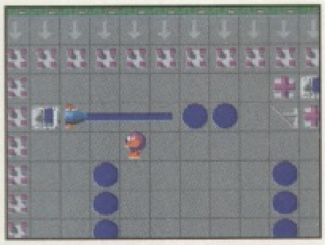
OVERALL 79%



Micro! Deluxe

Acumen

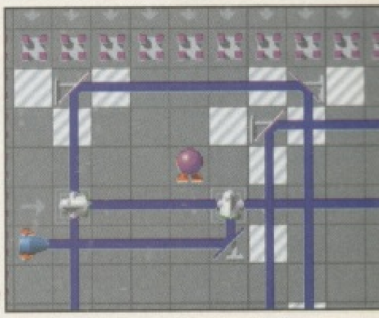
It's amazing, but the little guy in Micro! Deluxe bears an uncanny resemblance to our esteemed Ed, Dave Upchurch. Why? Well, he's round, he's cute and he spends most of the day playing with things. Admittedly Dave isn't bright purple, but that's just a minor detail.



Anyway, Micro! Deluxe is a simple puzzle game in which mirrors and other objects must be placed, moved and angled to deflect a laser through a maze and avoiding the obstacles. It's a bit like Gremlin's Deflektor, if you can remember that far back.

This Shareware version contains some 20 levels, starting off with simple puzzles containing just a couple of mirrors and a few orbs that must destroyed by the laser's passage. Later in the game the levels scroll in all four directions, and various other elements, including splitters (which split the laser beam in two) and switches (which change the colour of obstacle to allow the laser to pass by), are introduced, making it increasingly more complex and therefore tougher.

Sporting simple graphics and sound (of which a few of the samples are remarkably similar to various Pet Shop Boys tracks), Micro! Deluxe is fun and although it's not up to the same level as the likes of Doom, should keep Shareware scourers more than happy.



● **Contact: Transend (01274) 620536.**

OVERALL 77%

Patriot Commander

Timber Valley Software

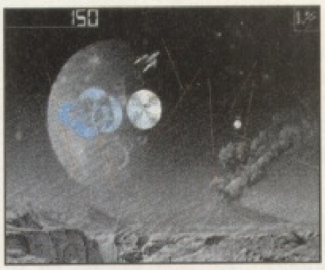
Let's get one thing straight. Patriot Commander *is* Missile Command. There's no two ways about it — it looks like the ageing classic, it plays like the ageing classic... it's even as basic as the ageing classic!

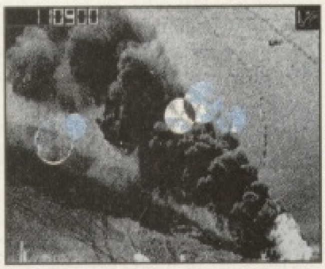
As if you didn't already know, the aim of the game is to destroy the incoming missiles before they strike their targets, one of eight buildings, landmarks and military installations that sit helplessly at the bottom of the screen. You too are equipped with missiles, and with these you counter-attack the relentless invasion. Strictly limited ammunition makes this task considerably harder, as do the five difficulty levels accessed via the pull-down menu.

Visually Patriot Commander is sparse, featuring a handful of grainy monotone backdrops which, unfortunately, often make the incoming missiles difficult to see and therefore make the game almost impossible to play. However, these backgrounds can be switched off, and what you're essentially left with an extremely accurate and therefore playable version of the VCS classic, Missile Command.

● **Contact: Transend (01274) 620536.**

OVERALL 80%





Where can I get this lovely **Shareware?**

If you're on the look-out for Shareware, here's a list of just some of the friendly and helpful Shareware libraries that you might like to try. Why not ask them to send you a catalogue of their games, or alternatively check this very magazine for adverts.

Transend Services BBS (01274) 622228
Transend Services Ltd (01274) 620536
Testware UK Ltd (01423) 886415
PD Soft (01702) 466933

Note that Shareware libraries often charge different prices for the same games, so always remember to shop around to find the best deal.

Also, remember that you'll usually pay by the disk, not by the individual game. This means that if one disk costs, say, £2 then a game like Raptor (which comes on a total of three disks) will set you back £6. Postage & Packing is normally included and, if it isn't, go somewhere where it is.

Rather than scouring the libraries for shareware, if you've got a modem why not try giving the following BBS systems a call. Initial on-line time is free but for more access most systems will charge you a small annual subscription fee.

After Hours BBS (01785) 228214
On-Line BBS (01839) 661199/88/77

As ever, the games featured here and a whole lot more are available on Compuserve and on the increasingly popular Internet.

Going on-line with **CompuServe**

If you have a PC and suitable communications software, then you can log onto CompuServe immediately. CompuServe's London dial-up node accepts all modem speeds up to 14,400bps and can be reached by dialing (0171) 490 8881. Simply dial this number and then type in the following responses to the system requests (shown on the left):

HOST NAME:	CIS
USER ID:	177000,5606
PASSWORD:	EXPLORE/WORLD
AGREEMENT NUMBER:	UKPCGAME
SERIAL NUMBER:	93006

If you have any problems, simply call CompuServe's Freephone helpline on (0800) 289458.

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Take to the skies — and the ground too this time! — in the excellent sequel to Desert Strike. You'll need brains as well as brawn to defeat the evil terrorist plot to nuke the States. In the May 1995 Issue we proclaimed it "one of the most captivating blasts of late" and awarded it 81%!

Min specs: 33MHz 386, VGA and 2Mb RAM.

Psycho Pinball

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Bring home all the excitement of the arcades with this excellent simulation of the noble art of pinball. As we said in our April 1995 Issue when we awarded it 90%, Psycho Pinball is "immensely addictive" and "simply the best 'pinny' game on the PC".

Min specs: 25MHz 386, VGA and 4 Mb RAM.

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Virgin — Available on HD only!

If you thought you'd won the war when you finished the original Cannon Fodder, then think again. Yes, those tiny little blokes with gun are back, ready and willing to tackle their toughest missions yet. We awarded the original 92%, and this sequel is just as good.

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Psygnosis — Available on CD only! You must be over 18 to order this game!

Just when you thought no-one could top Infogrames' superb Alone In The Dark games, along comes Ecstatica from Psygnosis, a super-spooky 3D adventure set in a town bedevilled by werewolves and minotaurs. In our January 1995 Issue we reckoned Ecstatica was "one of the most exciting and innovative games of the year", and gave it 92%!

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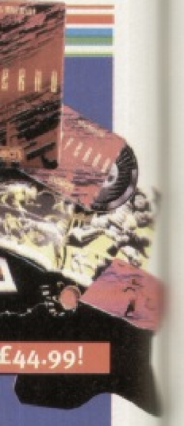

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Issue 5

In our first CD issue, we took a long hard look at Magic Carpet, Little Big Adventure, Transport Tycoon and Aces Of The Deep. And, if that wasn't enough, we previewed Loadstar, Cadillacs & Dinosaurs and DID's fab, new Chopper game called, er, Chopper. On the disk we had The Clue! and on the CD there was a cornucopia of demos including Retribution and Little Big Adventure.

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Issue 6

In Issue 6 we sank our teeth into Ecstatica, took to the skies with Dawn Patrol and US Navy Fighters and fumbled our way through Kyrandia 3: Malcom's Revenge. We also previewed every game that's coming your way in '95 and on the disks and the CD we featured Flight of the Amazon Queen, Novastorm, NASCAR Racing, Magic Carpet and Cyberwar. Woooo!

PC GAMES
Under a Killing Moon
Ecstatica
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Issue 7

You missed Issue 7? How could you? We had the first review of Origin's Wing Commander 3, featured the very weird Commander Blood and finally got to grips with Rise Of The Robots. We also took an exclusive peek at 3D-Ware, a brand new game creator, previewed Alone 3 and Dungeon Master 2, while on the disks we featured Bullfrog's Tube and 450Mb of The Making Of Wing 3!

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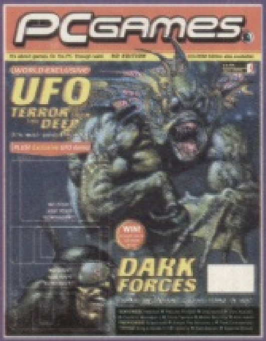
Issue 8

Id Software proved that they are the blast-fest kings with Heretic, Doom in tights. Not only could you play the Heretic demo but we gave you the full review, as well as cynical analysis of Alone 3, KA-50 Hokum and EarthSiege. We also peeked at UFO 2, Sim Isle and Frontier 2. And disks? Or disc? Well, we had Heretic, US Navy Fighters and Descent to keep you all happy...

PC GAMES
HERETIC
WINGS OF GLORY
CES!

Issue 9

UFO: Terror From The Deep rose from the depths to grace our front cover. "It's wet and it's wild!" screamed the coverline — and for once it wasn't wrong. Also wild (if not so wet) were Discworld, Psycho Pinball and Descent. On the discs there were smart demos of UFO: TFTD and Premier Manager 3, while on CD we also had Dark Forces, Alone 3 and Wings Of Glory.



Issue 10

In yet another PC GAMES exclusive, we took the wraps off Cryo's Aliens adventure — and very nice it looked too. We also previewed some hot new titles from Gremlin and Millennium and reviewed Mortal Kombat 2, Lost Eden and BioForge, amongst others. On the HDs there were demos of ClockWerx and Stardust, while on the CD there was BioForge, Lost Eden and Full Throttle.

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ALIENS
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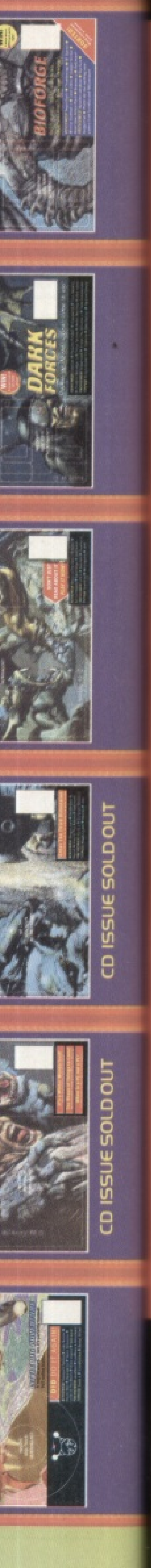
BIOFORGE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This month we rip apart Discworld, and also reveal game-winning tips for Mortal Kombat 2 and Premier Manager 3. But first, here's the complete solution to Origin's brilliant...

BioForge

More novelty fridge magnet than game hero, cyborg Lex's life should be made that bit easier by the following tips for Origin's sci-fi stomper...

The Great Escape

Woken abruptly by a splash of water on his face, Lex has more immediate problems than rust on his armour. Before Lex can escape from his cell the nursebot must be defeated, so switch into combat mode and either punch or kick the robot until it spins out of control and crashes into the forcefield bars.

Grab the meat and the log-book and scour the data files for any clues. Now turn your attention to the sparking electrified forcefield which prevents you from leaving the cell. The robot will have short-circuited the force bars, making them spark on and off, so carefully time your run and nip out when the power shuts off.

Walk up the corridor and take the severed arm, then run in to Cell 1 when the forcefield flicks off. Inside Caynan will attack, so either use the meat to distract his attention or beat him to death with the bloody limb! Grab the fork, the log-book and the photograph from the floor, then leave the cell by running through the force bars.

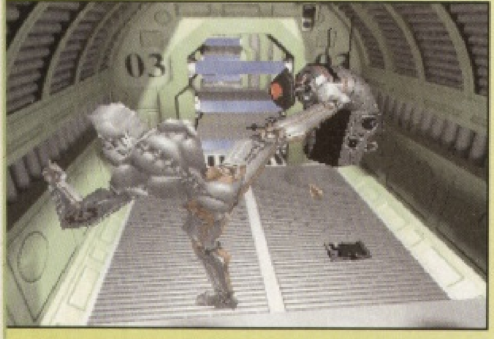
Drop the arm on the floor then, using the fork, prise open the control panel by the blast door and examine the circuit board inside. This is the first puzzle Lex will encounter, and is therefore extremely easy. Just create a circuit between the two nodes on either side. One word of warning, though — Lex will get an electric shock if the circuit is connected and does NOT link the nodes.

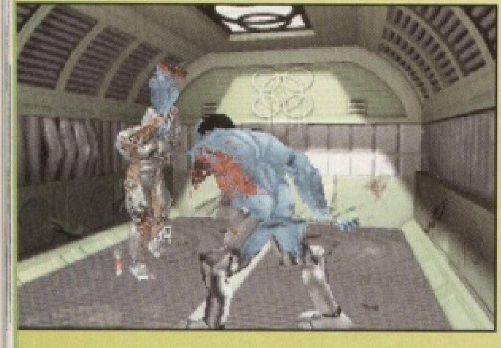
Once the magnetic lock has been deactivated, push the blast doors apart and head through into the guard room. Examine the monitors at the back of the room, more specifically the screen on the far right which displays a view of cell block 4. Deactivate the force bars.

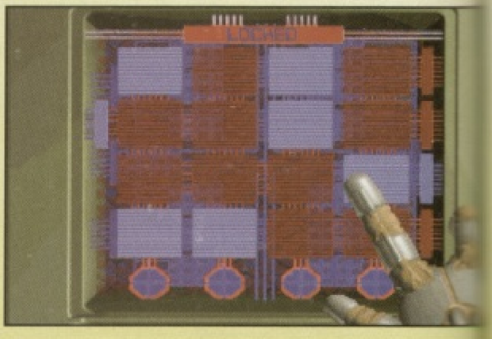
Use the left-hand computer terminal on the desk and switch the nursebot over to manual control. Using the arrow keys, guide the robot out into the corridor and use the mechanical pincers to pick up the severed arm. Move the nursebot into the guard room and across to the palm reader next to the huge steel doors. Position the robot so the arm lies on the reader.

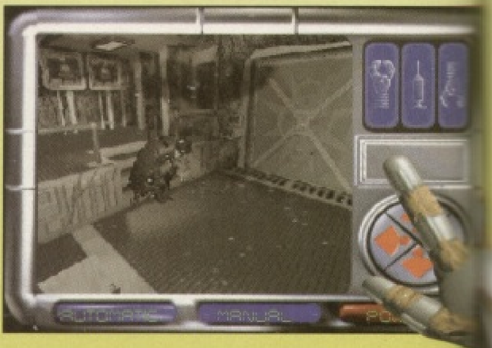
Leave the guard room and run down to Cell 4, taking the flute and log-book from inside. Read the log with care, as inside is the password for the security door (you'll find it hidden somewhere in Entry 12).

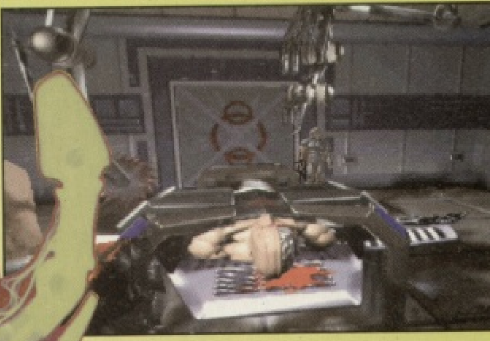
Return to the guard room and access the desk computer on the right, tapping in the code you just discovered in the log. Walk across to the palm reader and the door should open when you stand on the pressure-sensitive panel. Walk inside.

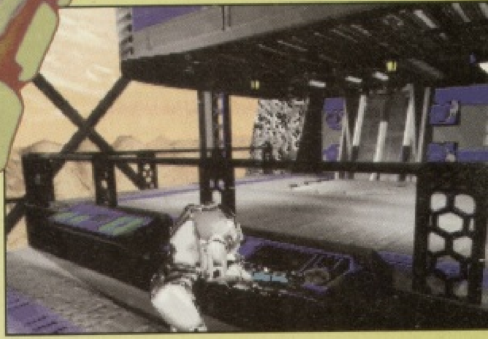


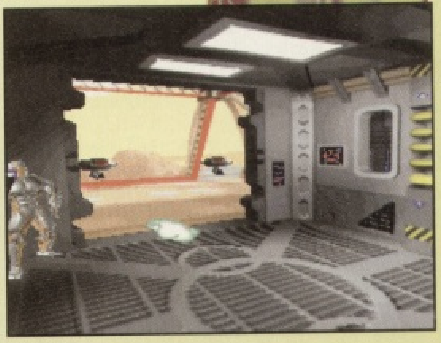












Freeze!

A guard robot patrols the corridor, and will nuke Lex if he's picked up by its sensors. Quickly run along the corridor and duck inside the elevator opening and wait for the robot to stomp past, then nip into the cryo chamber at the far end.

At the control panel on the far wall, hit the red switch to open the iris valve and then turn the wheel to release the Cryo fluids. At this point the hypersleep capsules will depressurise, so examine the cryo monitor on the wall to the left of the entrance. View the data files on chamber 1, then hit the emergency button to release the Cyber-Raptor.

Avoid the raptor's gnashing jaws and run across to the control panel, shutting off the cryo fluids and closing the iris valve. Wait for the raptor to stagger across and attack, then beat it to the ground so eventually it slumps unconscious over the iris valve. Hit the red button again, so the raptor falls through the hole. When the fighting begins in the chamber below, turn the wheel to release the freezing cryo fluids. Wait a few seconds, shut off the cryo valve, then venture down the ladder.

The cryo fluids will have turned the two monsters into giant-sized ice-pops, so walk carefully past, along the walkway and down into the tunnel.

At the junction, climb into the right-hand tunnel that leads to Cell 2 and defeat the Mondite guard when he stirs. Take the blaster, return back down the tunnel and along the walkway, up the steps and back into the corridor patrolled by the ED-209 look-alike. Step inside the elevator and zip up to Level 1.

Tower Assault

Stand by the elevator door, facing away from the six hoverbot guards waiting in the glass dome. Using the blaster, reflect your shots off the far elevator wall so they bounce back into the dome and hopefully strike the robots. It may take some time to get the angle just right — and take care not to shoot directly back at yourself! The first two 'bots can be defeated in this way, but to destroy the remaining four you must stand in the elevator doorway and bounce the shots off the glass dome.

When all six have been eliminated, run around the side of the lift and approach the cowering guard. Fire off the blaster twice (don't shoot the guard, though) and he'll agree to power up the proton cannon.

To use the cannon, simply step up to the controls and tap the SPACE bar. When the Mondite ship flies past, shoot it down in a hail of laser fire. Then, when the second dropship turns to face the dome, quickly let off a few volleys before it drops its missile load. If you hang around too long, the dome will be destroyed and the game will end.

Head back to the elevator and ride down to Level 3. Kill the robot guard by bouncing your shots off the elevator wall, then head out into the corridor and through the first door on the left.

Prepare To Meet Thy Maker

Inside the operating room, Doctor Mastaba takes control of Lex using a remote device, and then proceeds to demonstrate his powers on a hapless guard. A laser blast and one dead guard later, Mastaba's control pad is crushed by Dane causing Lex to collapsetp the floor, unconscious.

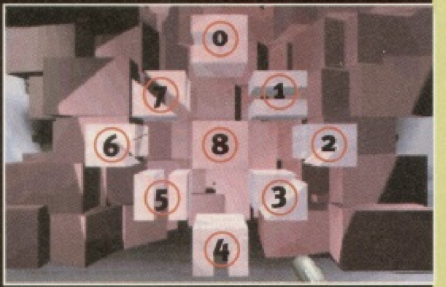
When he wakes up, Mastaba is gone and Dane is begging to be killed. Show Dane the photograph, then kill him by removing the battery from his leg. Charge your health up to full, then replace your battery with Dane's. Take the healing device from the floor and leave the room.

Walk through the door at the end and into the control room. Defeat the guard, then enter the hardsuit machine in the far corner. Kitted out in the power armour, walk down to the sub-level and access the Icarus computer, selecting the 'Access Icarus' option. Down in the machine room, kill the guard and take his walkie-talkie. Listen to Doctor Escher's distress signal, then take the Alien Cube from the ground and nab the battery from the front of the jet-bike — but only if you need it.

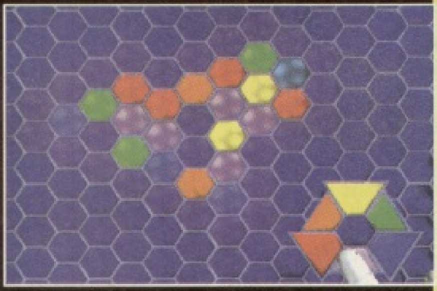
Take the elevator back to the control room and examine the reactor monitor (the far-right screen next to the hardsuit machine). Get the reactor code, then use the robot control panel (on the left, at the bottom of the stairs) to move the tracked droid out of the control room, down the corridor and into the reactor room on the left. Move through the airlock, wait for the door to open and then approach the guard droid before pushing it over the ledge.

"Don't always rely on your blaster, because it's useless against armour worn by some of the guards."

Access Granted



Alien Logic



It's Gonna Blow!

Leave the control room and head for the reactor room. Step inside the airlock, making sure you're wearing the hardsuit otherwise Lex will suffocate.

(The following section is against the clock, so don't hang around!)

Inside the reactor room itself, activate the light bridge by hitting the far panel, then run across the bridge to the central platform. Using the blaster, fire off a couple of shots at Drogg, luring him towards the bridge. When he turns and starts to chase you, spin around and run back towards the airlock and deactivate the light bridge, sending Drogg tumbling into the depths of the reactor.

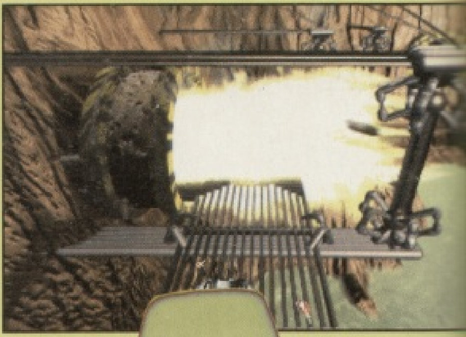
Switch the light bridge back on, then run across to the central ledge and pull the levers on either side of the platform. Quickly use the computer terminal and input the reactor code to prevent the whole place from blowing sky-high. Leave the reactor room and head back to the main elevator.

Take the lift down to Level 4. When Lex steps outside the door will automatically close behind him, and a guard droid will enter at the opposite end of the dimly-lit corridor. The robot must be destroyed (it takes approximately five blaster shots), and this is relatively simple provided you keep moving — stand still and Lex will be obliterated within seconds. Once the robot has been destroyed, open the airlock using the key-pad. This puzzle is quite simple, and is completed by illuminating the top and bottom lines of the grid.

The Great Outdoors

Outside, run along the platform and into the lift on the left. Run along the ledge, dodging the robot blasts, and into the tunnel. At the other side, climb down the grey blocks and, at the bottom, use the Alien Cube. This will transport you across the acid pools. Keep using the cube until you reach the far side, then drop down off the block and on to the ground next to the dropship wreckage.

Go straight inside the dropship to avoid the acid beast and approach the steel bars at the end of ship.



When you try to leave, the gate will open and Captain Tumolt will trudge out in full battle armour. Fight the captain in hand-to-hand combat, as the blaster is useless against his thick armoured suit.

Take the big gun and the key device from his corpse, then use the key to open the gate. Climb the steps and use the weapon computer at the back. Fire off a missile to attract the acid beast's attention, then wait for the creature to wade across to the pillar. Fire off another rocket to wound the beast, then switch off the terminal and leave the dropship.

bends down and suddenly realises he's holding a bomb, run to the right, stand on the grey block and use the Alien Cube to zip across to the other side of the acid lake. Warp across to the right and climb up onto the iron walkway. Run to the right and nip into the tunnel leading into the mountain. Place the bomb next to the blast door and run away — QUICKLY!

Return to the drop ship crash site to pick up your gun, then head back to the tunnel and into the hardsuit machine.

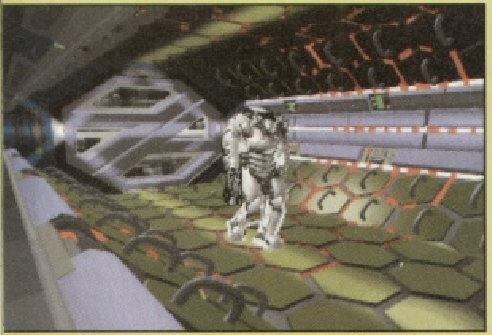
The Dig

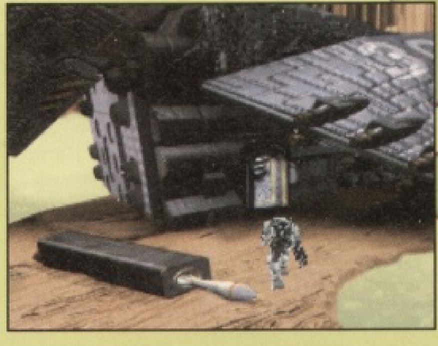
Down at the dig site, destroy the shrimp robot (again, the blaster is useless) before rushing across to Doctor Escher. Wait for her to stop talking then use the medical device to cure her superficial wounds, then take the alien translator she offers you.

Use the hardsuit machine to return to the surface, then leave the tunnel and run left, back to the weird alien blocks by the acid lake. Use the cube to teleport across to the far left (NOT back to the crash site) and walk into the alien temple. Use the scanner to translate the runes on each of the walls.

Leave the temple and return to the dig site, back across the blocks. Leave the cave and enter the tomb of soldiers through the door at the top of the screen. Within seconds Drogg bursts through the ceiling and attacks, so retaliate with kicks and punches. When Drogg retreats, follow him into the dig site and watch his actions.

Back in the tomb of soldiers, prize open the glowing sarcophagus and examine the puzzle on the alien's chest. Again, it's quite simple and is solved by matching the bottom pattern with the top by moving





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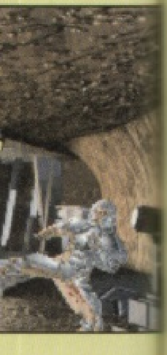
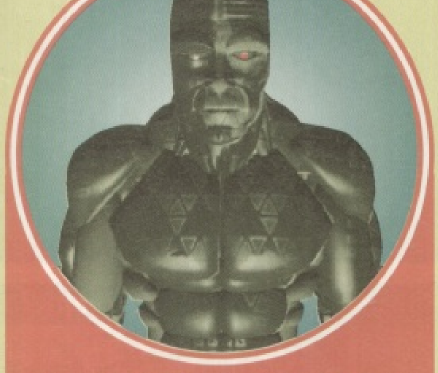
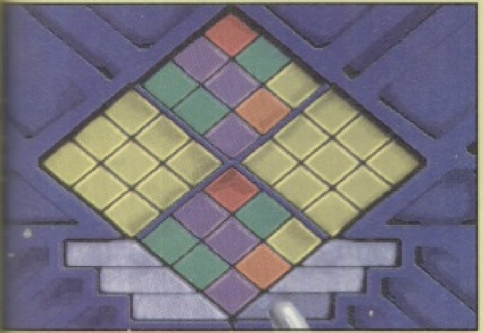
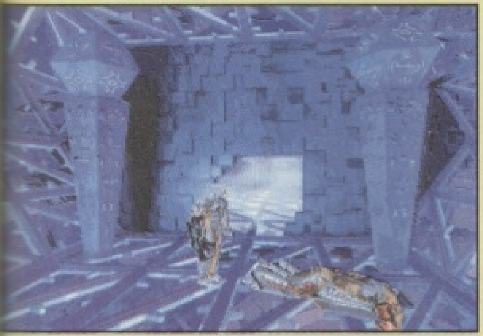




"Read all the log-books thoroughly — it may be tedious but you'll glean valuable information from them."

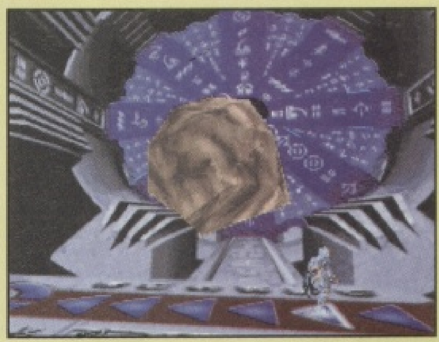


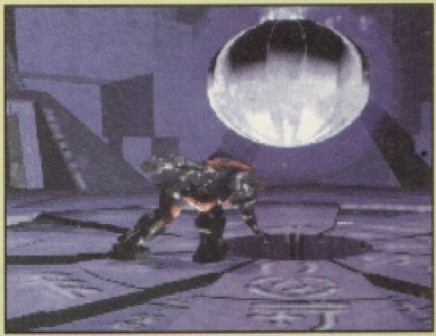


the Rubik's Cube-style blocks (see above). Once the puzzle is solved, the force shield will deactivate, allowing Lex to grab the talisman from around the dead guy's neck.

Head back to the dig site and use the talisman on the blue control panel. This turns on the gravity tube, so dive in. At the junction, use the alien computer and press buttons 2, 4, 6 and 8 (as shown in the 'Access Granted' panel nearby). Jump inside the newly-activated tube to ride to the zero-G room. Floating helplessly in mid-air, Lex is completely unable to physically move around, although he can propel himself along by firing his blaster.

Having used the force of the laser blast to fly across the chamber to the far door, enter the glass-floored room where you'll confront Drogg for the very last time. Again, fight him in hand-to-hand combat, but watch out for the two weak floor panels which fall through if you stand on them for too long. Grab the reflective suit device from Drogg's bloody cadaver, switch it on and walk through the shimmering forcefield on the far side of the room.





Far Out

Inside the weird alien chamber, use the console on the left. Solving the puzzle is easy and should take next-to-no time (see the 'Alien Logic' panel for a guide as to how to do this), and when you do so the chamber will flicker into life. An alien learner will glide towards you — talk to it and accept the battery it offers. Swap Lex's old battery with the new one.

Return to the gravity tube junction, crossing the zero-G room by firing your blaster. Once again use the alien monitor in the centre of the room, but this time enter the code 1, 6 and 8 (again, referring to the 'Access Granted' panel), before jumping inside the newly-opened warp tube.

Dodge the asteroids and flying debris, otherwise Lex will be smashed to pieces. At the same time step on the triangular icons on the floor, which rotate the patterned rings in the distance. To stop the debris, line up the blue highlighted icons so they all face down. When the gravity rings open up under the acid lake, jump into the tube and ride back to the junction, and then leap through the warp that leads to the dig site. Defeat the shrimp robot then take Doctor Escher's log-book, reading through it to find her medical computer access code.

Back at the tube junction, enter the code 1, 4, 6 and 8 to open up the last gravity tube. Before you leap inside, examine the view screen on the wall next to the tube and watch as the space marines patrol the alien temple. Hit the button on the side of the panel to move the orb in the centre of the room. When the marine peers down the hole, hit the button again to crush him under the weight of the stone ball. Raise the orb once more, and the remaining marine will lob a grenade down the tube. When it lands by Lex's feet, pick it up and throw it back along the gravity tunnel — but don't take too long in doing so.

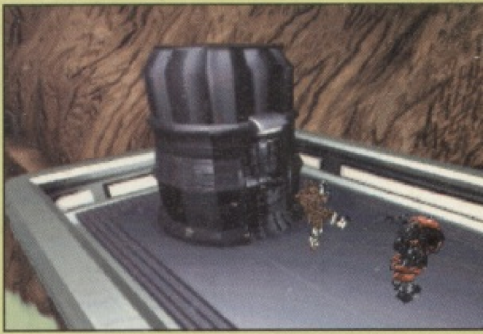
With both marines out of action, step inside and ride the warp to the alien temple (making sure you're wearing the reflective suit first). Leave the pyramid, clambering over the blocks and using the Alien Cube to zip across the acid pool. Run along the iron walkways, dodging the laser fire, until you encounter the marine by the tunnel. Beat him to death using your fists, then run along the narrow ledge to the elevator leading to the landing platform. Watch out for the lasers firing from the dropship — avoid them by waiting for the blasts to explode on the ledge in front before continuing along to the elevator.

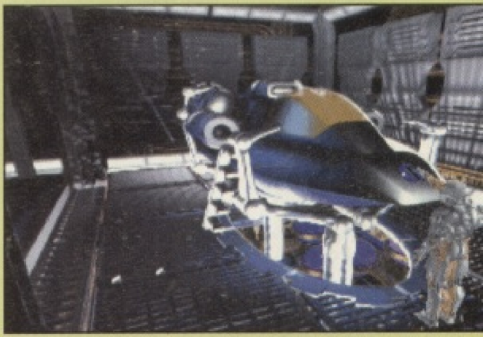
The End Is Nigh

At the top, fight the guard protecting the airlock then unlock the blast doors by solving the simple 9-button puzzle on the control panel. Run through the airlock (you must be wearing the reflective suit to survive) and along into the elevator. Take the lift to Level 3 and defeat the guard lurking in the corridor. Enter the operating room and use the computer to look up Lex's true identity, tapping in Doctor Escher's security code to unlock all protected files.

Leave the operating theatre and enter the control room. Take the elevator down to the Icarus project sub-level and replace the battery in the front of the bike with the power cell from Lex's leg. This should power up the craft, allowing Lex to climb in.

And that's it. Escaping on the jet bike, Lex's plight is at last over. As is the game.





"If your battery's low on power, use the healing device to restore health rather than Lex's bio-repair function."

Malcolm's Revenge

The Legend Of Kyrandia Book 3

Yes, so we printed the complete solution last month — but there's more than one way to skin this particular adventure. Come with us now as we explore some of Kyrandia's darkest secrets...

Let's Get Outta Here (Again)...

In all, there's a total of six different ways to escape from Kyrandia. Last month we explained how to achieve the quickest — by using a Portal Potion — and now here's the other five. LOAD up that old saved game (you did remember to SAVE when we told you to, didn't you?) and get going...

...By Juggling!

Make your way back to the Cross Roads and head south to the Dock. Look! There's a circus in town! And they've got a ship! But can you persuade the dog guarding the gang plank to let you aboard? Of course you can — by pretending to be a juggler!

Return to the Town Square, go down to the City Limits, down further to the Town Arena, and then head left to get to the Outskirts Of Town. Put Malcolm into 'Lie' mode, and use the nail-on-a-string in the coin slot to gain entrance to the Bath Building...

Talk to the baths attendant, and then move the cold/hot water dial into the red zone. When the severely scalded bathers have scattered, take the brown leather tunic you can see through the window. Leave the baths , go back to the Town Arena, then return and do the same thing all over again to get another tunic, and once again to get a boot.

Go back to the Toy Factory. Fiddle with the levers on the strange-looking machine, then use the book on the left. Keep fiddling with the levers in various up/down combinations until you see a blueprint of a ball float across the room. Put one of the tunics in the top of the machine and press the green button to magically create a leather ball. Now repeat the process with the other tunic and Brandon's leather boot to get a total of three balls.

Alright, so now you've got something to juggle, but if you return to the ship you'll discover that the dog also wants a fish cream sandwich before he'll set sail. To get one, first go to the City Limits and take two logs

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of wood. Return to the Toy Factory and use the last leather boot and the two logs to make a ball, a toy horse and a toy soldier (fiddle with the levers until the relevant blueprints appear).

By now, on your travels, you're bound to have bumped into a small boy who, if you talk to him, speaks complete and utter gibberish. Find him again and give him the ball, the horse and the soldier — he should trade a, er, delicious fish cream sandwich for one of them. Go back to the Dock and use one of the three leather balls on Malcolm. Now give the fish cream sandwich to the dog. Hoorah! The cantakerous canine likes your juggling performance so much he wants to hire you for the circus. Set sail for the Altar Of Cats on the Isle Of Cats...!

...By Miming!

This is quite similar to the '...By Juggling!' solution. Go to the Cellar and catch an eel by using the nail-on-a-string with the pool. Go to the Outskirts Of Town, go into 'Lie' mode and then watch the Mime Artist for a bit. When he turns around, use the eel with his tunic's hood. The Mime will smell something fishy, then head for the Baths.

Cheat your way into the Baths and get rid of all punters using the method detailed earlier in the '...By Juggling!' solution, then nick the Mime's costume. Put it on and then go chat with the dog at the Dock. One short ship ride later, you'll find yourself at the Alter Of Cats on the Isle Of Cats...

...By Flying! (Eh?)

Go to the Cross Roads and walk left to get to the Pegasus Landing Pad. Go into 'Nice' conversation mode and walk towards the pad to meet Zanthia, who arrives on the scene as a Pegasus. Hmmm, wouldn't it be nice to just be able to fly away too...? Zanthia would probably help you do it too — if you weren't Malcolm. Perhaps a disguise would help? The Mime Artist one will do (and we're not going to tell you how to get it *again*).

So, dressed incognito as a Mime artist, visit Zanthia in the Magician's Lodge (it's in the Town Square) and talk to her. She'll say she needs some essence of horse, so go off and make a toy horse using the same technique as in the '...By Juggling!' solution above. Now go to the Cellar. Use the handy nail/string/nut combo on the pool to catch an eel, then use the eel with the seeds to fertilise them. Fill the flask with water from the pool.

Go back to Zanthia, and offer her the horse. She'll decline your kind offer, but you've come too far to give up now. Put the seeds under her cabinet and water them. Then, while Zanthia clears up the mess, put the horse in the cauldron and then fill your flask with the freshly-made Pegasus Potion. Now go to the Pegasus Landing Pad, take off your Mime outfit and drink the potion. One short airflight later (please observe the 'No smoking' signs) you'll find yourself at the Pirate Beach on the Isle Of Cats...

...By Taking The Yellow Brick Road!

Well, not quite. However, this path does require you to click two 'eels together. Geddit? No? Oh well...

Go to the City Limits and pick up two logs. Now enter the Dairy and take two portions of sesame seeds from the tub. Head for the Dump and place some seeds near the deadly squirrel. Hypnotise the beast using the nut-on-a-string — it'll now be safe to pick up. Leave, then go back to the Dump and repeat the technique. You should now have two squirrels.

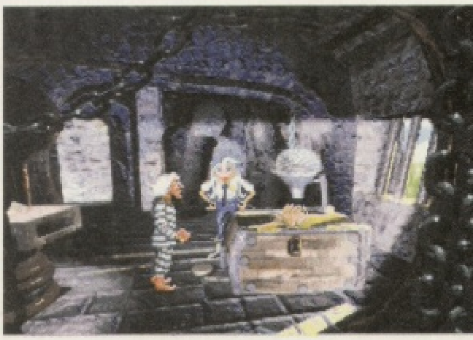
Now get a fish cream sandwich using the method described earlier in the '...By Juggling!' solution. (Incidentally, you can actually make one from scratch, but it's all pretty boring so we won't go into it here — maybe another issue.) Now steal the Mime Artist's outfit using the technique detailed in the '...By Miming!' solution, and wear it.

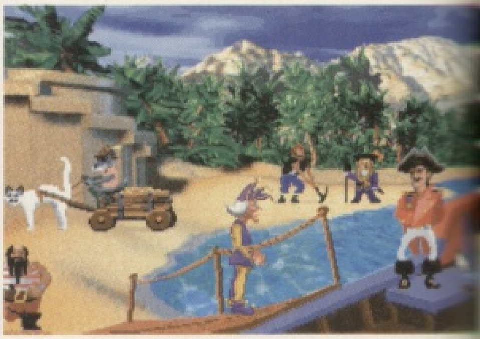
Now go to the Cellar and catch two eels by using the nail-on-a-string with the pool. Press the green apple on the rug, stand on it, then press the red apple — you'll be teleported to Darm's pad. Talk to Darm, offer him the sandwich and then torment him with the Jester Staff. Eventually he'll leave, allowing you to talk to Brandywine. When she's said all she's going to, offer her a squirrel. Now use the two eels together to be transported to the Dog Fort on the Isle Of Cats...

...By Escaping From Prison!

This is the longest but probably the most entertaining way to leave Kyrandia. It'll also take you to locations you'll never otherwise see. Before you start, make sure you've got a log, a broken flask and a nail in your inventory...

Go to the Bluff and place the log on the path leading to the Castle. Now alert the local police to your unwanted presence in Kyrandia by visiting Zanthia or Darm, or by talking to the Baths attendant in anything





but 'Lie' mode. Now return to the Bluff, whereupon Herman will rush out to capture you... only to trip over the log, allowing you to escape.

Place the broken flask in your hand (i.e. so that the on-screen pointer is the flask), then go back to the Bluff. Herman will try to catch you *again*... but the flask will rip his net open, allowing you to escape *again*. Return to the Bluff for a third time, whereupon Herman will finally take you prisoner. When Herman tells you to put your things in the basket, make sure you're holding the nail — you'll need it later.

In the prison cell, make a doily as per Rowena's instructions. Then, when she leaves, open up the machine with the nail, then prod the poor bloke inside with the scissors. Now try to make another doily — you should end up with a length of rope instead. Use the rope to escape via the window.

Get some sesame seeds from the Dairy, an eel from the Cellar and use them together. Get captured by Herman again, and make sure you're holding the seeds. This time you'll have to do some *real* hard labour. However, an escape route is close at hand — just put the seeds on the rocks and then click on Malcolm to make him 'water' them.

Now you have to get into prison again. Bit of a habitual criminal, aren't you? Get captured as before, but don't worry about having anything in your hand. You'll end up in a chain gang with Rowena. Use the cutters on her chain to allow her to escape. The guard will then chase her, letting you escape too.

Go back to the Castle or the Dump to find all your old kit, especially the nail. Get captured by Herman again, and make sure you've got the nail in your hand. You'll now find yourself in a slave galley, with Rowena back at your side. Ah. Use the nail to pick the lock and make good your escape. Eventually you'll find yourself at the Altar Of Cats on the Isle Of Cats...

Home Sweet Home? (Again)

The middle portion of the game, which mainly takes place on the Isle Of Cats, is linear — there are no 'alternate paths' to take through it. However, towards the end of the game you get the chance to choose whether to play on accompanied by either Gunther, Stewart or both together. Last month we completed the game with just Gunther, but now here's the other two paths explained. LOAD up that saved game (I bet you didn't bother to SAVE here either, did you?) and set forth...

Stewart At Your Side

Go to the castle and talk to Louie. You'll soon find yourself locked up in a jail cell — as a mouse! Use your Jester Staff on the mouse to your right until you get a nail, which you should use to pick the lock. Now unlock the other cells and free your fellow prisoners.

Use the eel on the seeds, then place the seeds on the door — you'll know when you've put them in the right place because Malcolm will mutter something about making a botanical bomb. Water the seeds with the flask of water to set the bomb ticking, and remember to keep the empty flask.

Once you've escaped you'll bump into Zanthia again, who'll give you a piece of cheese which you can use to turn yourself back into a human again. Now return to the Castle and talk to Louie. He'll demand a ransom for Brandon's release — the six gems from the Isle Of Cats!

If you haven't already got a toy horse, go to the Toy Factory and make one (we explained how you do this in the '...By Juggling!' section earlier). Now go to the Town Hall and ask Zanthia for a Pegasus Potion — give her the toy horse when she asks for it. Now go to the Pegasus Landing and use the potion.

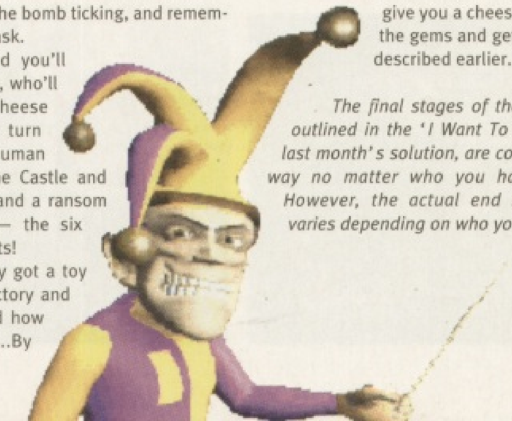
Eventually you'll end up at the Isle Of Cats. Grab the machete and head off into the jungle to find Fluffy, who will give you a cheesemaker. Go to the Altar Of Cats and use the cheese on the mouse statue to get the six gems. Now go back to see Fluffy, who'll give you a can of tuna — use it to travel back to Kyrandia.

When you arrive back in Kyrandia you'll find your inventory is empty. Go to the Castle Dump and search it for the Fish Queen's magic collar and the nut-on-a-string. Go to the Castle Foyer, show one of the gems to Louie and then give the collar to Jean Claude. The pirates will now be summoned by the Fish Queen and disappear. Yo-ho-ho!

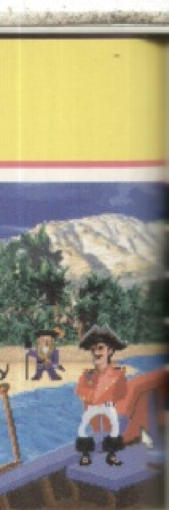
Gunther & Stewart At Your Side

This path is very similar to the 'Stewart At Your Side' one. As above, go to the Castle and talk to Louie, who will ask for a ransom of six gems. Now go to the Castle Dump and get a flask and a nail. Now go to the Magician's Lodge and unlock the door with the nail. Once inside, use the nail again to free the prisoners. Now get a Pegasus Potion in the same way as earlier.

Use the Potion to travel to the Isle Of Cats. Grab the machete and use it to go hunting for bones in the dense jungle. Once you've got ten of 'em, go and visit Fluffy. Give him the bones and he'll give you a cheesemaker. Now pick up the gems and get rid of the pirates as described earlier.



The final stages of the game, which were outlined in the 'I Want To Be Free!' section of last month's solution, are completed in the same way no matter who you have as your guide. However, the actual end sequence itself varies depending on who you chose...



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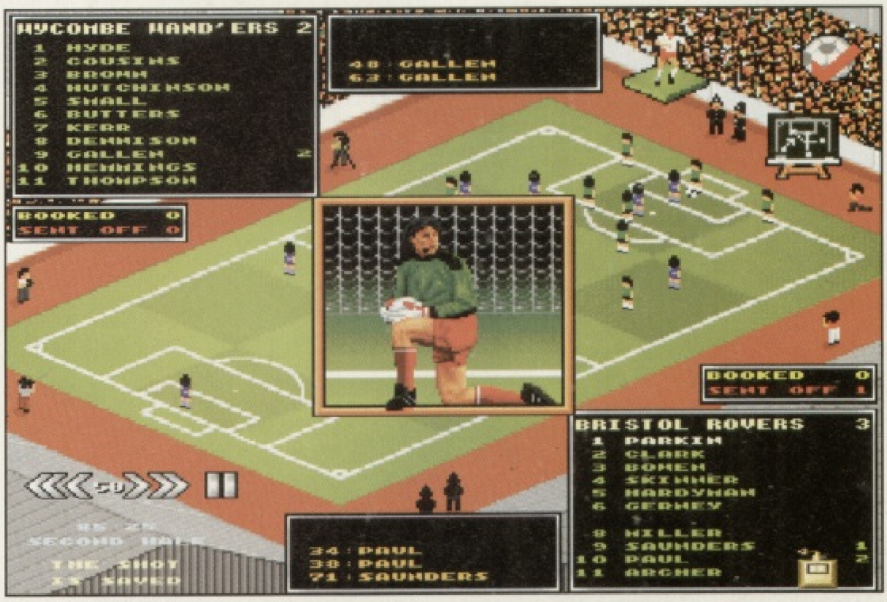
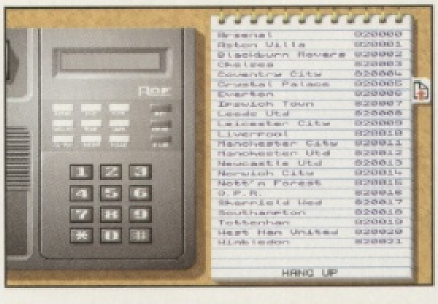
Premier Manager 3

If relegation to the dreary Sunday leagues is looming large, try out some of these tips and put yourself back on the road to FA Cup glory!

(1) Start off with Halifax Town — they've got the best strikers in the division so you should get more goals.
(2) Always play your best striker in the Number 9 shirt to capitalise on the 'maximum scoring opportunity' position.
(3) Put all your defensive players onto long shooting — after all, they're not going to get close to the goalmouth very often.
(4) Put midfielders onto long shooting as well.
(5) Put all your strikers onto medium shooting, except your star-player Number 9 who will be able to round up any loose balls in the six-yard box with short range shooting.
(6) Never sell youth players — you could have the next Ryan Giggs! Youth team players improve quickly and keep your team's age down.
(7) Try to ensure that all your squad have played at least four full matches by the end of the season, including all your youth team players. Their statistics will improve far better in the close season when they've got a bit of experience under their belts.
(8) Set the defence's passing to 70%. We'll have none of that continental 'dribbling out of defence' nonsense here — this is the English league, dammit!
(9) Put your midfielders' passing to about 60%.
(10) Put attackers' running to about 75% with short passing as well.
(11) Hire the best staff you can afford.
(12) Try buying players through the phone as you can often find out-of-contract players who work out cheaper. You can never beat personal contact when wheeler dealing.
(13) Make sure that all your fit players are in training — there's no room for slackers in this game.
(14) Try to keep your players' morale high — at least 7. Financial bonuses can help.
(15) Use the 'Player Loan' facility as much as you can. You can flog someone else's half-man into the dirt and a reserve from a higher division may be better than one of your own stars.
(16) The better the gym you build, the better your coaches will perform.





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Aston Villa            020001
Blackburn Rovers       020002
Chelsea                020003
Coventry City          020004
Crystal Palace         020005
Everton                020006
Ipswich Town           020007
Leeds Utd              020008
Leicester City         020009
Liverpool              020010
Manchester City        020011
Manchester Utd         020012
Newcastle Utd          020013
Norwich City           020014
Nott'n Forest          020015
Q.P.R.                 020016
Sheffield Wed          020017
Southampton            020018
Tottenham              020019
West Ham United        020020
Wimbledon              020021
HANG UP
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Two-Footed Cheat!

When you start the game, opt for a two-player game and pick Halifax Town as Player One and Gateshead as Player Two. Now go to the 'Pick Your Squad' page, find your three worst players, and put them at the bottom of your reserves. Now exit this page and press SPACE to become Player Two — the Gateshead manager. Use the telephone and find the Conference League, choosing to view Halifax Town, and try to buy one of the three poor players. Enter £9,999,999 for the club fee and then put in a suitable offer for the player fee, wage and contract.

If you get yes, yes, yes, and (might I venture?) yes, then Halifax will get their first £10 million. Do this with the other two crappy players and — voila! — £30M! Now resign as manager of Gateshead. You'll now be the proud owner of Halifax Town, and with £30M at your disposal can either buy the best stadium going or the whole of the England squad!

Eat My Goal!

To maximise support and revenue and to minimise fines and penalties, aim for the following utopias in each division.

	Conference	Division 3	Division 2	Division 1	Premier League
Ground Safety	2 Stars	2 Stars	3 Stars	4 Stars	4 Stars
Ground Facility	Basic	Average	Good	Excellent	Excellent
Gym	None	Basic	Basic	Average	Average
Ground Rating	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%
League Seat	£5	£8	£12	£14	£16
League Terrace	£3	£5	£6	£8	N/A
Cup Seat	£8	£12	£18	£21	£24
Cup Terrace	£5	£8	£9	£12	N/A
Overdraft/Loan	£250,000/£50,000	£750,000/£100,000	£2,000,000/£200,000	£5,000,000/£500,000	£8,000,000/£750,000

Yes! You've read about 'em... you've written to the papers in disgust about 'em... now *do* 'em! Here are the finishing moves for ALL the characters in Acclaim's brill beat-'em-up!

Mortal Kombat 2

Wot?

The combat controls have been abbreviated. This is what all those funny little letters mean...

B	Back (i.e. away from opponent).
F	Forwards (i.e. towards opponent).
U	Up.
D	Down.
LK	Low kick.
HK	High kick.
LP	Low punch.
HP	High punch.

N.b. Pit Fatalities will only work in the Pit stage, hence the, er, name.

Johnny Cage

Torso Rip	D, D, F, F + HP (up close).
Decapitation	F, F, D, U (up close).
Pit Fatality	D, D, D + HK.
Babality	B, B, B + HK.
Friendship	D, D, D, D + HK.

Baraka

Decapitation	B, B, B + HP (up close).
Skewering	B, F, D, F + LP (up close).
Pit Fatality	F, F, D + HK.
Babality	F, F, F + HK.
Friendship	Hold down block, U, F, F + HK.

Kung Lao

Slice-In-Two	Hold down block, F, F, F, LK.
Hat Decapitation	Hold down LP, B, B, F, release LP.
Pit Fatality	F, F, F + HP.
Babality	B, B, F, F + HK.
Friendship	B, B, B, D + HK.

Sub Zero

Ice Grenade	Hold LP, B, B, D, F, release LP.
Freeze & Shatter	F, F, D and HK, F, D, F, F + HP (up close).
Pit Fatality	D, F, F + block.
Babality	D, B, B + HK.
Friendship	B, B, D + HK.

Shang Tsung

Human Vacuum	Hold HK for three seconds then release (must be up close).
Soul Sacrifice	Hold down block, U, D, U + LK.
Pit Fatality	Hold down block, D, D, U, D.
Babality	B, F, D + HK.
Friendship	B, B, D, F + HK.

Mileena

Stab Frenzy	F, B, F + LP (up close).
Fillet Face	Hold down HK for three seconds, then release (up close).
Pit Fatality	F, D, F + LK.
Babality	D, D, D + HK.
Friendship	D, D, D, U + HK.

10 WINS
85
WINS 00
CAGE
REPTILE

07 WINS
64
WINS 00
KUNG LAO
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15 WINS
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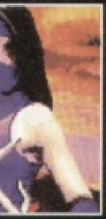

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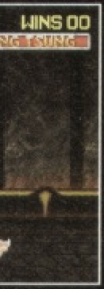
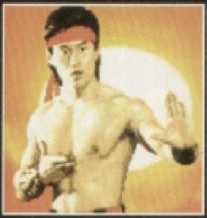


Liu Kang

Dragon Morph	D, F, B, B + HK (up close).
Cartwheel Attack	Hold down block and rotate joy-pad through 360 degrees away from opponent.
Pit Fatality	B, B, F + LK.
Babality	D, D, F, B + LK.
Friendship	F, B, B, B + LK.



Scorpion

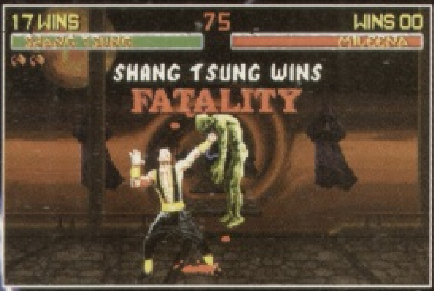
Death Breath	Hold down block, U, U + HP (up close).
Spear Slice	Hold down HP, D, F, F, F, release HP (up close).
Pit Fatality	B, F, F + block.
Babality	D, B, B + HK.
Friendship	B, B, D + HK.

Reptile

Tongue Lash	B, B, D + LP (must be half-a-screen away).
Invisible Death	Use Invisibility move and F, F, D + HK.
Pit Fatality	D, F, F + block.
Babality	D, B, B + LK.
Friendship	B, B, D + LK.

Rayden

Super Shocker	Hold down LK (up close), then release, tapping LK.
Super Punch	Hold down HP for six seconds (up close).
Pit Fatality	U, U + HP.
Babality	D, D, U + HK.
Friendship	D, B, F + HK.



Kitana

Decapitation	Block, block, block + HK (up close).
Kiss Of Death	Hold down LK, F, F, D, F, release LK (up close).
Pit Fatality	F, D, F + HK.
Babality	D, D, D + LK.
Friendship	D, D, D, U + LK.

Jax

Head Clap	Hold down LP, F, F, F and release LP (up close).
Most 'Armless	Block, block, block, block, LP.
Pit Fatality	Hold down block, U, U, D + LK.
Babality	D, D, D + LK.
Friendship	D, D, D, U + LK.

13 WINS
80
WINS 00
REPTILE
JAX

02 WINS
78
WINS 00
KITANA
LIU KANG

Yet More Secrets!

There are three 'secret' opponents hidden inside Mortal Kombat 2 — here's how you get to meet them...

Jade

In the stage just before the '?', win one round using Low Kicks only. You'll then be teleported to a special Blue Portal stage and fight Jade. She can't be hurt by projectile attacks and is *very* fast. She also uses Kitana's fan throw move a lot, so watch it!

Smoke

On the Portal stage, look out for a head popping up in the bottom-right corner of the screen saying "Toasty!" (this is more likely to happen if you use a lot of uppercuts during the fight). When this happens, quickly press Down then Back — you'll now meet Smoke.

Noob Saibot

To meet Noob Saibot (that's 'Tobias Boon' backwards, which is the name of one of the coin-op's designers), you have to win 25 fights in a row, with the last fight being against another player. Saibot is one of game's tougher characters, because he's seen only in silhouette.

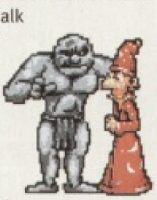
Discworld

Are you lost in the streets of Ankh Morpork? Need a little direction? Yes? Then look no further, because we're here to take you on an all-expenses-paid tour of Discworld...

Act I

Upon awaking, open the wardrobe in Rincewind's room and take the pouch. Now go to the Arch Chancellor's room and talk to him. Next visit the closet and search it until you find a broom. Go back to Rincewind's room and use the broom on the luggage to wake it up. Now trot down to the library, open the luggage and give the banana to the librarian.

In return you'll get a book, which you should take to the Arch Chancellor. He'll tell you that you need to find five objects: dragon's breath; a staff; an imp; a hair roller; and a frying pan. Now go to the dining room and swap the broom for Windle-Poon's staff. Leave the Unseen University and talk to the apprentice by the pond. Get the frog and open the university door by double-clicking on it.

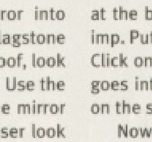


You'll now be presented with a map of Ankh-Morpork. First visit the town square and pick up a tomato and throw it at the tax-collector in the stocks. Pick up another tomato and search the floor for the worm that falls out. Talk to the street urchin to learn how to pickpocket and practise your skills on the old blokes to get some bloomers. Go into the psychiatrists, leave and then re-enter to get the butterfly net.

Now trot off to the street. Enter the toy shop and take a toy and some string, using the string on the worm. Go to the fishmonger and get the picture, then go to the barber's and look at the hair roller before talking to the woman twice. Next talk to the barber and, when he's daydreaming, use the pickpocket to get the hair-roller from his pockets.

Make your way to the livery stable and get the corn from the sack. Next head for the palace. Talk to the guards — they'll then have an argument, allowing you to enter the palace. In the bathroom, take the mirror.

Now go to the alley and put the mirror into Rincewind's inventory. Stand on the glowing flagstone to catapult yourself onto the roof. Up on the roof, look in the background for the tower and go there. Use the mirror on the tip of the flagpole, then use the mirror again to adjust it. The dragon will take a closer look and breath on it. Don't worry — the luggage will catch it before it hits the floor.

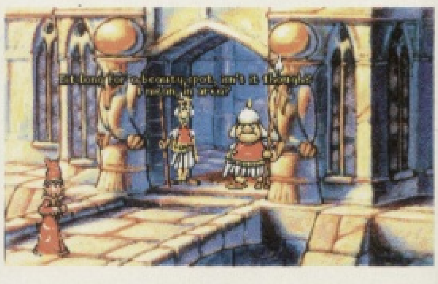


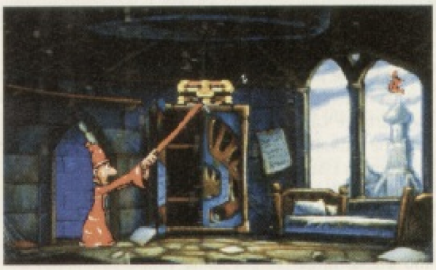
You now have dragon's breath on the mirror. Go down to the roof again and move left until you see a ladder bridge. Click on the ladder and it will drop into the luggage. To exit, double-click on the window found on the side of a house in the middle of the screen.

Walk further down the alley — but make sure you don't stop on the flagstone too long. You should see a door to the alchemists, which you should enter. Look at the box and push the shutter release to reveal an imp. Put the corn in the flask and wait for popcorn city. Click on the imp to try and grab him. He escapes and goes into the mouse hole in the alley. Use the worm on the string with the hole to get him out.

Now go to the Drum and talk to the scared guy, then chat to the barman. Get the tankard and matches. Return to the Unseen University, go round the back and take the fertiliser. Put the butterfly net into Rincewind's inventory and use the ladder on the window. Use the net to catch the pancake.

Go to the closet and use the matches on the strange shape on the wall, then take the packet. Now go to the kitchen and take the banana and the frying pan. Go to the library and look at the banana behind the sleazy guy's ear, then ask him





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about it. Go to the Arch Chancellor and give him the frying pan, the hair-roller, the imp, the staff and the dragon's breath.

In return he'll make you a dragon-detecting device, which you should grab at the earliest opportunity. When you've got it, head for the city. When the map appears, move Rincewind down and to the left — eventually you'll discover the dragon's lair. (Hmmm, that sounds familiar...)

Act II

Go back to the barn and take the screwdriver. Head for the library, seek out the sleazy guy. Give him the treasure and get the gold banana. Go to the inn and take the sheet off the bed and the bubble-bath from the bathroom. Back at the University, get the bin which lies behind the building, then get the cornflour from the kitchen.

Now go to the library and give the librarian the gold banana — he'll open up L-space. Go through and wait until a thief appears and takes a book. Later on you'll have the opportunity to take this book, but don't bother now — if you take it you won't be able to pass through L-space. Push the book to open the bookcase and leave, going back to the city map, which is now shrouded in darkness.

Follow the thief to find the hide-out. At the thieves' secret den, click on the left drainpipe to adjust it. (You'll need to use it later to listen in on a conversation and so to get a password. Go to the inn, head for the bedroom and use the sheet on Rincewind. Click on the jewellery box and watch as he ends up with a hammer.

Now go to the park and use the frog on the drunk, then use the net to catch the pretty butterfly. In the street, open the dunny door and read the graffiti on the wall. Go to the streetcorner and use the butterfly on the lamp, then get the pot on the window ledge. Now go to the Broken Drum and look at the picture on the wall behind the little guy. Use his glass when he turns to start a fight. Outside, use the ladder with the Drum sign to get a drumstick.

Return to the library and go back to the Drum via the miracle of L-space. Talk to the scared guy again for some handy information about the hammer. Now look at the drinks and ask the barman for a drink in order to get a glass. Go back to the street and get the robe near to the dunny, then get the hogsfather doll from the toyshop.

Go back through L-space. Let the thief steal that bloody book once again, then run to the hide-out before he returns. When he arrives, use the glass on the right-hand drainpipe to listen for the password. Use the robe on Rincewind and then watch the secret summoning session. Go back to the inn and do the same as before with the sheet — this time you'll get the gate pass.

Go through L-space, then head for the dining-room. Use the drumstick on the gong and then get the prunes outside the Unseen University. Go to the square, enter the psychiatrickerists and talk to the troll. Wait until it's your turn, take the ink-blots from the psychiatrickerist and then leave. Go in again and talk to the maid to get a note, then leave. Take a donut from dibbler and give it to the dunnyman, then go and talk to the street starfish.

Go to the street and give the barber the note. Now use the apparatus to get a gold tooth. Go to the city gate, then open the crate and get a keg and some fireworks. Give Carrot the guard the gate pass and then leave the city.

On the way to the Dark Woods, get the cockatrice feather and egg. Fill the pot with custard from the cauldron in Nanny Ogg's house. At the Edge Of The World click on the coconut tree, then use the net to get the coconut. To prise it open, use the screwdriver. You can also take the lamp.

Go back to the fishmonger and use the string to get the octopus. Put the eight-legged beast and the custard in the dunny can, then exchange the prunes for the fishmonger's caviar. Get the belt with a gold buckle from him too.

Go to the palace and use an inkblot on the guard so that he'll let you enter. Talk to the peasant and use the garbage can with the fool. Use the bubble-bath with the bath, then get the cap with the gold bell on it. Go through L-space.

In the Shades, go right and into the house. Talk to big Sal (you must have read the graffiti by the dunny) and ask for the Special. Give her the egg, the coconut and the cornflour to get some yellow bloomers. Go back through L-space again.

In the square, give the urchin the bloomers to get a handshake and a bra. Use the bra on the ladder. Go back to the Shades and give the mason a handshake to get a gold trowel. Now go right and find the hovel. Use the muffled ladder to cross, then try to take the key. Use the feather on the thief, then take the gold skeleton key.

Go to the alley and put the hogfather doll into Rincewind's inventory, then stand on the flagstone to get onto the roof. Use the doll with the chimney. In the alchemist's shop, use the keg in the fireplace and then the string with the keg. Leave, and then light the fuse hanging out of the drainpipe with the matches. You'll now get the gold brush.

Go to the barn — you now have all the gold items. Give them to the dragon. In the square talk to Nanny Ogg and ask her to get the carpet — use sarcasm on her and then she'll ask for a kiss. While she's waiting, all puckered-up, take the custard book from the stall. Now go through L-space.

Return to the library. Before the thief comes, take the dragon book (the one you've left alone all this time) and click it on the custard book to exchange the book covers. Put the dragon book (which is actually the custard book inside the dragon book's cover) into the empty place.

Act III

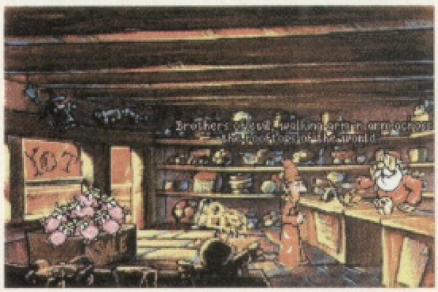
You need to collect six items before you can be turned into a hero with a million-to-one chance (talk to the city guards about it, if you want to know more). These items are: soot (camouflage), blindfold (mask), transfer (birthmark), magic book (magic spell), magic item (Eye Of Offler), and a sword that goes ting (sword).

First go to the kitchen in the Unseen University and take the spatula. Go to the Arch Chancellor's room and take the hat. Walk to the Drum, look at the drinks and talk to the barkeeper twice. Take the worm from the glass and use the string on it. Go to the hide-out and knock on the door to get a custard tart.

Go to the Shades and talk to big Sal again. Go to the hovel and open the bag to get the knife. Go to the mural (on the wall where the mason used to be) and use the spatula to get the soot.

Walk across to the street and take the barber's scissors and the appointment book. Now go to the psychiatrickerists and talk to the girl. Use the recently-acquired appointment book to get her autograph before you eventually see the psychiatrickerist. Walk into the square and get a bag of leeches from dibbler and open it. Use the knife on the rubber belt on the dunny machine. Pick up an egg from the stall and get the snake off the floor. Use the fertiliser and then the starch on the snake. Finally, talk to Red Sorghum, the Amazon.

That doesn't work!



Brothers of evil, walking arm in arm across the rooftops of the world.

And verily shall he follow forth the ten sacred names of the forbidden dawn, it's a mark of the dreaded crocodile god Offler!

Comfy looking bench, that.

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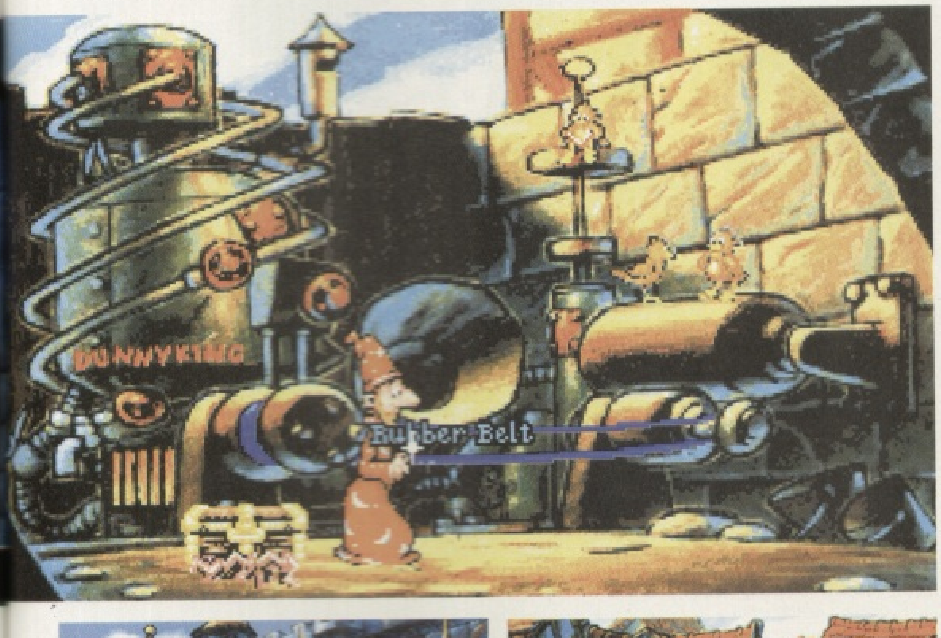
In the Woods turn the crank to fill the pot from the bucket. Use the screwdriver to take the crank. Go to the palace and use an inkblot or a leech to get past the guards. Get the brush from the bath, then go right past the throne and into the dungeon. Use the worm on a string with the hole by the cells to tempt the rat. Look at and use the rat — it'll turn into an imp. Use the crank on the rack to the right to get a sword, then get a bone from the skeleton.

Go to the toy-shop and get a toy, then use the bone on the gluepot. Go to the inn and, in the bathroom, fill the pot with soap. Outside, go right and give the bone to the dog. Talk to the sailor, then the innkeeper. Look at the sailor's tattoo and then talk to the sailor again. Go to the alley, talk to the alchemist and, when he leaves, get the corn then take the camera.

Go back to the dining room in the Unseen University and swap the snake for old Windle-Poon's staff. Go to the Edge Of The World and use the whistle on Rincewind. Then light a firework and throw it at Polly. Use the broom handle to extend the net and use it to get Polly. After the whistle goes over the edge, look at the hat and then use it on the fork. Use the chain of handkerchiefs, then look for a glint on A-Tuin and take it. Use the hankies to clamber all the way back to Discworld.

Go over to the inn and give Polly and the whistle to the pirate. Go to the livery stable and use the brush with the soapy water. Next use the brush with the bumper bar. Take a close look at the bumper, then look at the number plate and the bumper sticker. (Lady Ramkins will now appear as a location on the map of Ankh-Morpork.)

Go to the alley and put the knife in Rincewind's own inventory, then jump up onto the roof. Cut the ladder with the knife and go down to the alley and talk to the assassin. You'll discover that the donkey is now in the town square.



Go to the square and cut the donkey's tail (that's a moustache, for your purposes) off with the scissors. Go to Lady Ramkins and use the knocker on her door, then go around the back. Look at the molten pile, then talk to her. Use the door-knocker again, and when she appears go round the back and steal the rosette, leash and nail. Go to the city gate and talk to Carrot about swords.

Go to Nanny Ogg's and click on the wool, then take the mallet from the wood pile. Use the rosette on the sheep before using the imp with the impsomatic camera. Use the camera with the sheep, then use the sheep picture with the octopus picture. Go through the hatch and look at the potions. Talk to Nanny about the potions, use the custard tart on yourself to kiss her, then take the truth potion. Go to the mine and use the sword on the swordsmith. Go to the Woods and give the barber the appointment book.

Go to the street and talk to the barber. Next, head towards the town square and talk to the street starfish. Now go to the alley and put the rubber belt in your inventory. Climb up to the roof and then to the tower. Use the belt on the flagpole tip and bungee in order to get the transfer.

Head off to the Drum. Use the nail on the beam and hang up the sheep picture. Now talk to the braggart. When you have the tankards, pour the truth potion into them and continue the conversation. He'll tell you where the Temple Of Offler is. Ask the barman about elderberry wine.

Walk to the inn, enter the bedroom and look at the door before unscrewing it. Talk to the bogeyman (use the 'Angry' conversation). Go to the Drum again, go down the trapdoor and look for elderberry wine. Fill the tankard and store it in Rincewind's inventory, otherwise the luggage will drink it en route to the mine.

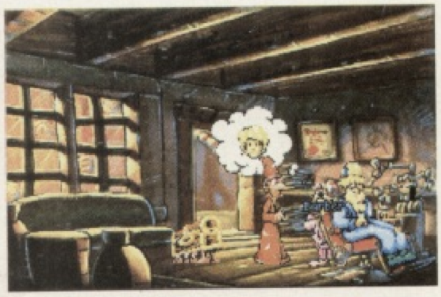
Back at the mine, give the wine to the swordsmith, then hand over the sword. Go to the gorge and get thrown off the bridge, then use the carpet on the monk. Enter the temple and take the bandanna (blindfold). Use the leash on the luggage and tie the blindfold on Rincewind. At the altar, fill the pouch with sand and use it on the Eye.

Go back to the Unseen University and, in the dining room, talk to the lecturer of recent runes about heroes. Go to the library and search it for a magic book, which you should take. You are now a Hero!

Act IV

Go to the square and look for the key on Lady Ramkins, then take it. At Lady Ramkins', use the key on the dragon's door. There is a molten pile on the floor — to get past this, carefully click past the blue patches a few times before getting Mambo. Go to the square and use Mambo on the dragon. Then give Mambo a lit firecracker and use him on the dragon again. To finish the game, use the love custard tart on the dragon. Congrats, you've done it!

Can I interest you in a dragon detector, sir?



cheat lab

SCRUN-N-N-KERRACK! Hear that? That's the unattractive sound of games being played to breaking point by the Cheat Lab's ace team of Tefal-headed tipsters. And here's their latest set of test results...

Descent

Interplay

Yes! There are yet more cheats for this excellent 3D shoot-'em-up — and better still, we're going to reveal them to you! As we explained last month, type GABBAGABBAHEY at the very start of the game (i.e. when your ship materialises) to activate the cheat mode. Now type in the following for various beneficial effects:

RACERX	**Toggles invulnerability on and off.**
GUILE	**Toggles cloak on and off.**
TWILIGHT	**Recharges your shields.**
BUGGIN	**Puts the game into turbo mode.**
BRUIN	**Awards you with an extra life.**
FLASH	**Illuminates the exit path from the complex.**
AHIMSA	**Toggles robot firing on and off.**

SCORE
169
92
LASER LVL: 1
CONCSN MISSILE 005

Sim City 2000

Maxis

We've had loads of people begging us for a mega cash cheat for this top sim from Maxis. Well, we live to serve so here's the cheat in full...

First of all, start a new city and select the 'Hard' option (it doesn't matter what year you select). When the newspaper comes up on screen, turn it off straight away and pause the game. Now, open the Budget box and then open the Bond box. Select the Repay Bond option and 'OK' it. Then go to Issue New Bond option and 'OK' that too. Close the Bond box and close the Budget box. You should now find that you have $10,000.

But that's not all! Now type the word 'fund' in lower case five times — you should now have $60,000. Go back into the Budget box. Reopen the Bond box and select Repay Bond, then 'OK' it. Then select the Issue New Bond option and you'll see that interest rates are totally messed up. Unpause the game and you'll find that you've been given $500,000. Put the game in 'Fast' mode and leave the machine to play for a few mins. Now you should have a large amount of cash to do with as you please. Hooraah!

Little Big Adventure

Electronic Arts

One of the recurring problems in EA's classic adventure is that you can run out of dosh. Fortunately, one of the resident Cheat Lab boffins has come up with a fun way of maintaining the cash flow.

Go to the library on Principle Island. In the first room, throw your ball at the rabbibunny behind the till. When he runs to sound the alarm, step on the staircase to the left. The guard that runs in should be within range of your ball, but he won't be able to get you. Kill him and then repeat the process until you've killed the rabbibunny. Now you can get to the till which holds 25 kaches. You can do this as often as you like to get loads of money. If only real life was as simple!

TFX

Ocean Software

Okay, so TFX has been around for a while now, but we've had so many letters and calls from readers desperate for help that we've decided to print some cheats to end their misery...

To activate it, start the game and go to the callsign selection screen. Hold down CTRL and press ENTER on the numeric keypad. This will give you the callsign 'Inferno'. You can now skip the training stages.

If you hold down the SHIFT key and press D while in the game, all your weapons will be reloaded.

Finally, if you hold down SHIFT and type PLO during the game, you become impervious to enemy fire. Plus, if you crash on a flat surface you will be transported to the next level!

MIG29
180
270

Dark Forces

LucasArts

It has come to our attention that a number readers are having problems with that top LucasArts game, Dark Forces. If you're one of that unhappy band then your luck is in, because we have our own Jedi Master here at the Lab who's prepared to play Obi Wan Kenobi to your Luke Skywalker and tutor you in the ways of the Force.

First off, my young apprentices, here are all the level codes. Type them in any time during the game to jump to the relevant level:

Level 1	LASECBASE
Level 2	LATALAY
Level 3	LASEWERS
Level 4	LATESTBASE
Level 5	LADETENTION
Level 6	LARAMSHED
Level 7	LAROBOTICS
Level 8	LANARSHADA
Level 9	LAJABSHIP
Level 10	LAIMPCITY
Level 11	LAFUELSTAT
Level 12	LAEXECUTOR
Level 13	LAARC

What's that? You say you need a little more tuition in the ways of the Force? Trouble is, with the amount of teaching you need, we could be here until doomsday. So, I will give you a some cheat codes that will help you overcome the Emperor's minions. Type them in at any time during the game to bring about their potent properties...

LAPOSTAL	This gives you full guns, ammo, shields, health, battery power, gas mask, infrared goggles and ice cleats.
LAIMLAME	Awards you total invincibility.
LAREDLITE	Stops all enemies from moving.
LARANDY	Supercharges your weapon, making it fire at double speed.
LASKIP	This is a level warp that also shows you the cutscene.
LACDS	This enables a map 'supermode' that shows the location of all the items in the game.
LAPOGO	This rather nifty code disables the height checking on the game, allow ing you to scale high ledges by sim ply walking up to them.
LABUG	The opposite of LAPOGO, this allows you to to duck lower than normal, giving you access to some more hidden areas.

That little lot should be enough to keep even the biggest wimp going. If you find that you are still having problems though, I suggest that you turn in your blaster and take up Bantha farming!

cheat lab

Interactive

The sun is out, the sky is blue, but you're crap at games — so what you gonna do? Ask the Cheat Lab (da-de-da-de-daa), and we will help mend your broken heart.

Dear Cheat Lab,

I am having serious difficulties with PowerDrive by US Gold. On the night stages, I keep on crashing and busting my lights, which means that I soon run out of money because I have to keep paying to get them repaired. Any advice please?

Simon Bastion,
Camden Town, London.

My dear lad, the solution to this particular problem is quite literally staring you in the face. It' s a bit sneaky, but simply turn up the contrast and brightness on your monitor and — voila! — you' ll be able to see your way around, no problem. By the way, is it true that Camden smells in the summer?

Dear Gamesmaster,

I am stuck on two games: Alone In The Dark 2, and The Hand Of Fate. In The Hand Of Fate, how do you get past the rat in the cave? And in Alone In The Dark 2, how do you get out of Hell's Kitchen? I've killed the people and placed the crown on the Queen's statue but what do I do now? Please, please can you help me?

Hilda Dautzenberg,
Western Australia.

Is this some kind of sickjoke or what? GAMESMASTER!?! I' ve half a mind not to help you at all! But as I am so generous and lovely, I' ll help you out — but only with Alone 2. Putting the crown on the statue will open the chamber of sorcery. Pick up the amulet that you find there and you will be transported to the loft. Now you can continue your quest. Gamesmaster indeed...

Dear Cheat Lab,

I am quite new to computers, and I have just bought Championship Manager. Unfortunately, I lose quite often, no matter what team I select or which players I have. Any ideas?

A. Simpson,
Milton Keynes.

Indeed you are in luck, my friend! We at the Lab happen to be quite proficient at footy management-type sims, so I can easily provide you with the help you so desperately need. Go to the team tactics screen, and select playing style. The only style you need is Direct Ball.

Now go to Team Formation and select 4-3-3. Now pull both your wide midfielders into a central position and set your full backs to push forward. Finally push your main striker (No. 9) forward and away you go. This system takes a few games to work, but once your players get used to it, the results will start to go your way.

Dear Cheat Lab,

I really like Heretic, but I am having problems finding all the weapons. I have tried using the IDKFA cheat from Doom, but all this does is remove any of the weapons I originally had. Please help!

P. Derry,
Bournemouth.

Fear not ! Cheat Lab exists purely to serve untalented gamesters such as yourself. Simply start the game as normal, and type in the word RAMBO. Now you have all the weapons. If you need any more info, check out PC GAMES Issue 9.

Dear Cheat Lab,

I have the PC version of Theme Park and I know that on the Mac version, if you enter HORZA as your nickname then press C at any time during the game, your bank balance will bulge with $500,000. Is there any way of using this cheat on the PC version without using any fancy software?

Andrew Proffitt,
Glasgow.

Andrew, what can I say? You yourself have provided the answer to your own question. Type in HORZA as your nickname and hold down CTRL and C. I bet you feel a bit daft now, eh?

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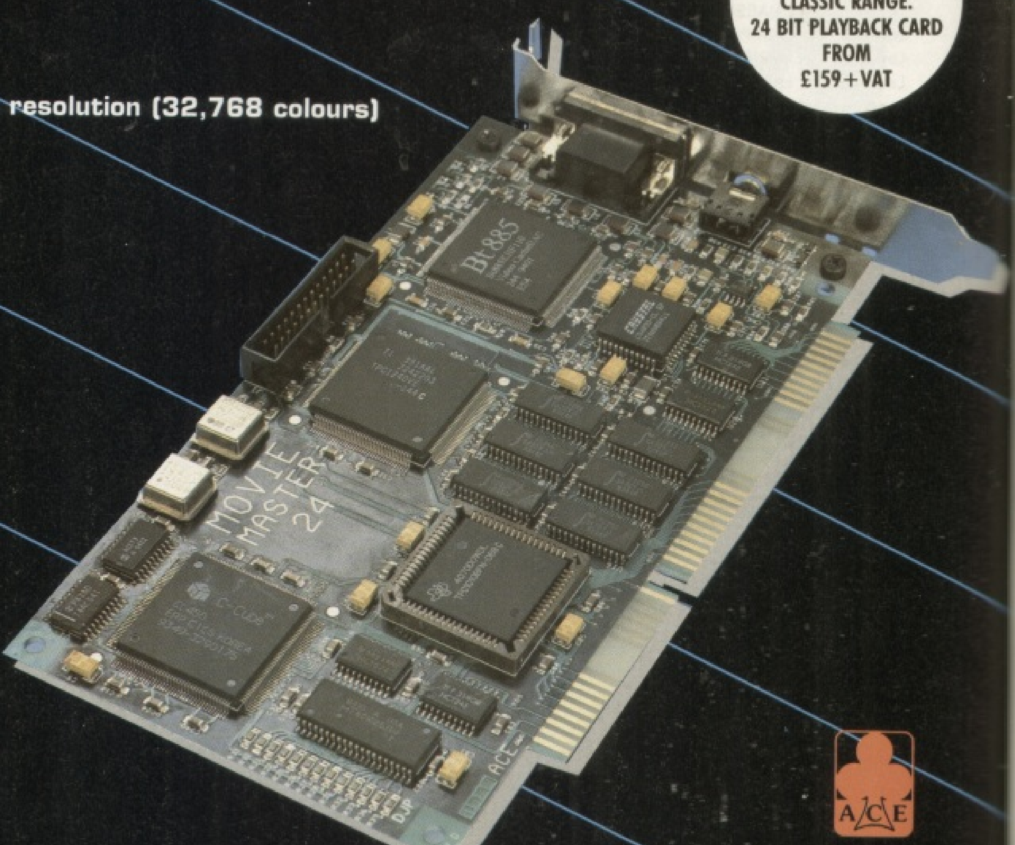

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Dr SPANNER'S
Bits 'n' PCs

Scalpel in hand, Dr Spanner dissects and inspects the latest hardware marvels, as well as a whole new batch of infotainment-related multimedia software...

Timex Data Link Watch

If you're after a gadget that will keep you amused for hours, turn your friends green with envy and is genuinely useful to boot, you ought to think seriously about investing in a Timex Data Link watch.

Designed in association with software giant Microsoft, the Data Link isn't just any old watch, but an almost fully-fledged personal organiser as well. You can store all sorts of information on the watch, including appointments, important anniversaries, phone numbers and things to do, ready to be accessed at the push of a button. And — get this, innovation fans — it even tells you the time too (in two time zones of your choice), is water resistant to 100 metres, has five programmable alarms and comes with the Timex Indiglo night-light.

Sounds too good to be true? Not at all. The beauty of the Timex Data Link is that it actually works. When you buy the watch you also by a Windows program, and it's here that you enter all that useful information. If, say, you are about to sit your summer exams, you can enter the time and subjects into the program, and then download them into your watch so that they are stored for future reference.

All you have to do is press the watch's mode button until you get the message "Comm ready", select the "Send to watch" option on the Windows program and then hold the watch 6-12 inches away from your PC's monitor. The PC will convert the information into a barcode which flashes up on screen, and this is read by an 'eye' on the watch face. When the information is downloaded, the watch will beep each time you have an appointment, meeting or exam to go to, or you can scroll through the list of appointments to see what's coming up next.

Anniversaries work in a similar way (you need never forget your mother's birthday again), and other information, such as phone numbers, are stored so that you can look them up whenever you need them. The only downside, other than the watch's rather bulky and unattractuve appearance, is that you can't enter any information into the watch other than when your sat down in front of your PC, so it'll never really replace your pocket personal organiser in terms of pure convenience.

It is, however, an extremely useful gadget, and it's none too expensive either considering what it does. And having used it I have to admit that I wouldn't be without it now. Who needs a Filofax taking up space in your bag when you can wear one of these babies on your wrist?

● **Manufactured by: Timex. Price: £109.99. Tel: (0171) 630 8180.**

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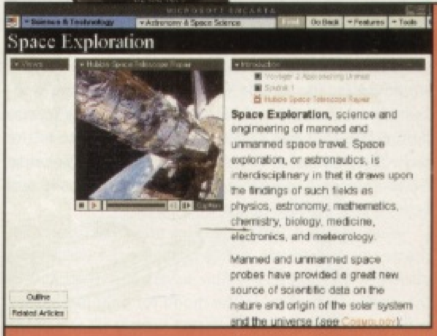

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Manned and unmanned space probes have provided a great new source of scientific data on the nature and origin of the solar system and the universe (see Cosmology).

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*Encarta '95^CD^*

One of the nicest things about CD-ROM is the fact that you can throw tonnes of wholesome multimedia goodness onto a single shiny little disc and then show off your all-singing, all-dancing computer to your mates without hours of installation. Hurrah and huzzah, especially if that particular silver platter happens to be Microsoft's Encarta '95, where the multimedia is an outrageously classy act.

Encarta '95 is more than just the encyclopaedia it says it is. By now it's become an institution in its own right. If you haven't got a copy, and your machine is fitted with a CD drive, then there must be something dreadfully wrong with you. Like a computer without Doom, your CD drive without Encarta '95 is incomplete, a lump of lifeless technology that stands out and shouts "Use Me!" at the top of its metaphorical lungs.

But what makes Encarta '95 so bloody essential, then? Well, look at it this way — people bought The 7th Guest by the shed-load to show off their CD-ROM drives, and it wasn't even a half-decent game. Encarta's your way of showing the world what an amazing computer guru you are, wired into the whole multimedia shebang, and on the cutting edge of all things PC.

Oh, and it's a damn useful piece of kit to have about as well. Why? Because there's going to come a time when you need to find out something about something. It doesn't matter what. You might feel the sudden urge to discover what the reproductive cycle of the slipper limpet (crepidula fornicatae) is, for all I know, or get some idea of what Tunisia would be like as a holiday resort. Either way, Encarta's where it's at.

No need to faff around with books and all that malarkey. Just slap the disc into the drive, boot up Windows, and Bob's your father's brother. Welcome to the world of *easy* information. Hit the search function, let your drive whir around for a bit, and there you have it. Sorted. Any one of 26,000 articles, each pages long with pictures or other multimedia wonders to bring it all to life. No two ways about it, Encarta '95 is the dog's danglies when it comes to finding out stuff.

● **Published by: Microsoft. Price: £90.00. Tel: (01734) 270001.**

The name's Erskine. Christina Erskine. And if you've got a technical problem, I've got a not-so-technical solution. That's why they call me...

THE TROUBLE SHOOTER

TROUBLESHOOTER

This month's cry for help comes from Befuddled of Bournemouth: "Over the last few months, my hard disk has started acting strangely," he says. "Sometimes it goes all slow and makes horrible grinding noises, and I've got a directory full of weird and totally impossible file names, like #Σß∂®¥¶•^˚µ~∬. What's happening? Is it a virus?"

Befuddled, do you want the good news or the bad news? The good news is that it's almost certainly not a virus. The bad news is that your hard disk is not a happy bunny. Sounds like it needs a good spring clean to me.

How do I spring clean a hard disk?

Well, you don't do it literally. From all that you've told me, it sounds as though your directory entries have got screwed up and you need to do a surface scan. It shouldn't be too difficult to repair, but you'll have to prepare yourself for the fact that you may lose some data.

Whoah, hold on there! What's a directory entry?

The directory entry is a list held in the PC of the files in each directory, the file details (size, date last modified, and so on) and where on the hard disk the first bit of the file is saved. When you type DIR at the DOS prompt and the list of files whizzes by, DOS didn't actually go through the whole of your hard disk, looking for files in that directory and then posting the filename up on screen.

Oh no. It just looks up the directory entry and lists that. Which means that if your directory entry is scrambled, then you get files like #Σß∂®¥¶•^˚µ~∬, and utter nonsense. However, it doesn't necessarily mean that the files themselves have been corrupted. Quite often you'll find that once you've fixed the directory entry, the right files reappear. Also, quite often, they don't.

Well, that's very comforting. What do I have to do to fix this thing, then?

Well, just have a look in your DOS directory and see if you have a file called SCANDISK.EXE. I'm assuming your DOS directory isn't messed up, since your machine does seem to be working — after a fashion. To load up Scandisk, just type — hey! — SCANDISK at the C:> prompt. Then you'll see a blue screen and it will start analysing all the directory entries and file allocation tables —

File allocation tables?

— Yes, they're like directory entries. If a directory entry is an index of filenames, then a file allocation table is an index of disk sections (disk clusters, in fact). It lists which clusters have which bits of files in them. If the information doesn't tally and there are bits of files unaccounted for, or sub-directories that don't make sense, Scandisk will post a message to that effect on-screen and you can either delete the offending files and/or directories or ask Scandisk to try to fix them.

Deleting it means you'll lose the data, but if things have got really scrambled then at least you can start again with a clean slate. With lost bits of files, you also get the option to save them to a new file that you can open and look at, but frankly, it's unlikely that you'll be able to piece them together again and they might as well be consigned to the bin as well.

What about that other thing you mentioned just now — a surface scan?

This is the operation which should sort out that painful grinding noise you've been getting. That's likely to indicate that an area of your hard disk has become damaged and the read/write heads are struggling to retrieve any of the data. The surface scan goes through the hard disk, sector by sector, cluster by cluster, checking that each one is clean and readable.

If it finds a damaged bit, it will fence it off by marking it as a 'bad sector'. That part of the disk will then be out of bounds to data, and DOS won't try to save anything to it. One word of warning: it can be quite a slow process, so do it at a time when you've got about an hour free.

But I'll still be able to use the disk, won't I?

Oh yes, lots of hard disks have the odd bad bit. However, if there's been a lot of damage and you lose a serious amount of disk capacity, you might want to consider saving up for a new one. You should also keep running Scandisk regularly to make sure the problem isn't progressive — you know, you fix one bit and then another bit goes. Hopefully, it's just one trouble-spot on the disk, but it might be a sign that the drive is about to wear out.

And all this comes with my regular version of DOS?

Scandisk comes with DOS V.6 and later. Before that there was only Chkdsk (meaning CheckDisk) which does the file allocation and directory entry jobs (though it's not as easy to use) but not the surface scan. I've mentioned Scandisk because (a) it's effective, (b) you should have it already with DOS, and (c) because even if your hard disk is working perfectly, running Scandisk regularly (once a week, once a month, depending on how much you use your PC) keeps your hard disk clean and will act as an early warning signal if any problems are going to crop up.

Yes, but it does look as though I'm going to lose quite a lot of my files, doesn't it?

If your files are sitting on corrupted bits of your hard drive, then it's not going to be easy to put them back together again. There are products on the market such as Norton Utilities and PC Tools, and very good they are too, but they will cost you £100 and upwards and there's no guarantee that they will be able to mend your files. It's up to you how important you think that data is.

Another problem eliminated — bag it and tag it, boys. If you've got a problem with your PC that needs a spot of troubleshooting, drop me a line and we'll talk it through. And when I'm not being the TroubleShooter, I've got a day job as editor of PC REVIEW, sister magazine to the very wonderful PC GAMES. PC REVIEW covers the whole gamut of PC entertainment and includes a Technical Help section, in which you can find more detailed versions of the articles which appear in this section.

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LETTERS

Dave the Ed has to deal with no end of problems, so cheer him up with a letter. Send it to: PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Or you could Fax him on: (0171) 972 6700, or e-mail him at: PCREVIEW@CIX.COMPULINK.CO.UK.

I'll Name ***That Game...***

Dear PC GAMES,
For six months I've read all those magazines that tell you what PC to buy, and in the same time I've saved as much as I could. Now I've just got my annual bonus and I can't wait any longer. So tomorrow I get my very own Pentium Multimedia PC, and in another six months I will have paid for it. In the meantime I've managed to scrape together £50 to spend on a game, and so I bought a copy of your excellent mag and dashed home to read it.

But what's this? Disaster! First, I've got to save it from hordes of green-skinned TERRORS FROM THE DEEP, then there's a quick DESCENT to clean up swarms of droids. This is followed by quickly wiping out the DARK FORCES before making myself a PIZZA TYCOON for lunch. Next I've got to train an army of METAL MARINES and break the EARTHSIEGE, before even thinking about stopping for a couple of relaxing games of PSYCHO PINBALL. Oh no! It's 19:42 already, and there's still a PACIFIC AIR WAR to win yet.

All I wanted was one good game, and now look what you've done. They all sound absolutely brilliant, but which do you recommend that I go for?

Brian Smith,
Milton Keynes.

Wordplay huh? There's nothing like it to amuse your family and friends round an old camp fire. But seriously, we often face the problem of recommending any one game to somebody when there is so much quality stuff coming out every month.

Basically you'll just have to decide on what style of game you'd most like play and then read PC GAMES to find out the best in that genre. Actually, come to think of it, it's not that hard a decision after all.

Shark Bites

STARLETTER

Dear PC GAMES,
Congratulations on the feature 'Look Out, Shark!?!' that was printed in the last issue of PC GAMES — it was excellent. Over the past few months I've become increasingly concerned by all these new multimedia companies, especially the film companies, announcing that they're entering the software business. It seems to me that all it's likely to mean for us poor punters is an increase in the number of dreadful 'interactive movies' (which is a contradiction in terms if ever I heard one), and frankly I think we've got enough of them already.

However, although I felt slightly more confident about the future after reading your feature, I can't say I'm completely convinced. I can't help feeling that if it's a choice between quality and profit, then the big companies will go for profit every single time — after all, big business is all about making money, not creating art (although it might be stretching things just a little bit calling computer games 'art'!).

Also, it's all very well the developers saying that they're being given the money to write the 'dream' games that they never had the resources to do before, but if somebody else holds the purse strings then surely their hands will be tied as to what they can do?

Colin Jacks,
Condover.

Well, Colin, we understand your fears. But at the end of the day it's down to market forces whether companies will pump out endless 'interactive movies'. If enough people want to buy 'em, then companies will carry on creating them. It's as simple as that...

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A Load Of ***Pinballs***

Dear PC GAMES,
I have just read your review of Psycho Pinball and have just one question to ask: how long did it take Codemasters to write it?

This article was so biased and full of inaccuracies it was astounding. The reviewer claimed it had more variety than Epic Pinball or Pinball, but this is hard to believe. Psycho Pinball has 4 tables, Pinball Dreams or Fantasies CDs have 8 tables, Epic Pinball has 13. Which one is likely to last longer?

The biggest load of rubbish had to be the claim that Psycho Pinball was the only pinball game on the PC to offer a multi-ball feature. Crap! Has the reviewer ever played Epic Pinball? I have, and can assure you that several of its tables include multi-ball.

I am normally impressed by the standard of reviews in your magazine, but feel that this review is not up to the usual standard.

Anthony May,
Solihull.

You are more than welcome to your opinions, as strong as they may be, and that basically means that so is PC GAMES' reviewer. All our reviewers are chosen on the grounds that they know what they're talking about, and although you've managed to read the Psycho Pinball review literally, you've perhaps missed reading between the lines occassionally.

For instance, the reason why we said that Psycho Pinball has more variety than the other 'pinny' games around is because each table is packed with loads of little sub-games, which is something no other PC pinball game has got. We stand by our review of Psycho Pinball — it's superb, no matter what you say.

It's Heresy *I Tell You*

Dear PC GAMES,
So Heretic is hailed as the best game since Doom, but is it any good? Well, if your trial coverdisk version is anything to go by... er, no.

The game itself is okay, but the music is completely awful and unless the volume is turned right down it's very muffled. The game also has a tendancy to throw me into DOS with a technical error message at the top of the screen. Also, for some reason, artifacts keep disappearing from my inventory for no reason. So, as far as I can see, the idea's good but the execution and de-bugging aren't up to standard.

While I'm moaning about Heretic, a quick complaint about most games that use the joystick. At the start of these games I'm asked to calibrate my joystick by centering it and hitting fire. Fine so far. Then I'm asked to move it to the top left and hit fire.

The only problem at this stage is that nine times out of ten I won't be able to hold the button for the very short amount of time necessary to stop the game going straight onto the next joystick position, leaving it thinking that the top-left and bottom-right positions are in the same place.

Most games don't include a recalibration option, so I have to exit and come back in again several times. No exactly my idea of fun.

Pete Smith,
Rickmansworth.

Admittedly, several people have brought the Heretic problems to my attention, but it all boils down to their own machine's calibration - I find that it always works when you skip past the CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT on boot-up (by pressing the SHIFT key after the MS-DOS message appears). As for joystick calibration I find that a copy of The Sun and ten minutes on the loo tends to help.

O, For The Wings...

Dear PC GAMES,
What are you doing, saying that the Wing Commander 3's missions have less 'depth' than X-Wing's or TIE Fighters? What exactly do you mean by depth?

I have played the games and the only difference seems to be is that in X-Wing or TIE Fighter you have a few extra objectives, a few more 'bits'. That's it. And yet you mark Wing Commander 3 down for not having these 'bits'. In the end it's all about blowing up enemies and the 'bits' are only more elaborate ways of doing this.

Stop being blinded by so-called 'depth' and remember, we buy computer games to have fun!

Andrew Morrell,
Wilts.

For somebody that is keen to play games for fun, you seem to be easily riled by the opinion of somebody else who enjoys a different game to your own favourite. That said though, X-Wing and TIE Fighter are better games, and even the smallest 'bit' does make a difference when you're asked to fork out a large amount of moolah for what is, when broken down in your fashion, a collection of bits!

NEXT MONTH

E³

"What's 'E³'?" I hear you mutter. Well, for your information, E³ is the software industry's nickname for the Electronic Entertainment Expo. Held in Los Angeles from May 11th-13th, it's the quite simply the biggest computer games show in the world.

Major publishers and developers from all around the globe will be showcasing the exciting new games they've got in Top Secret development. And we've heard that both Quake, Id Software's super-sequel to Doom, and Rebel Assault 2, LucasArts' follow-up to the biggest-selling CD-ROM game of all time, will be unveiled there!

And in the next month's issue, we'll have a full report live and direct from the show itself. If you thought the stuff on display at this year's ECTS was hot then, believe me, you ain't seen nothing yet...

Now then, now then Dr News,
Uh-oh, uh-oh, uh-oh, oh, rattle-rattle, jewelry-jewelry, ow's-about you reserve me a copy of PC GAMES next month. Wowww!

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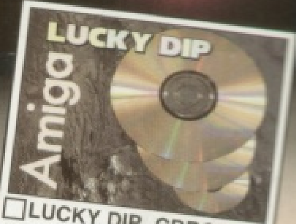

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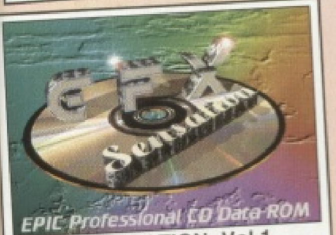

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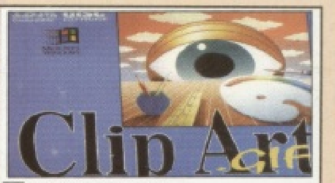

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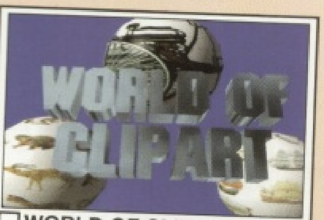

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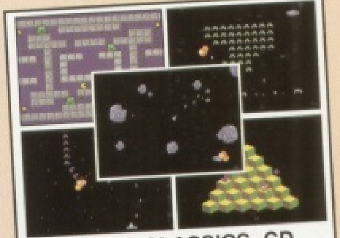

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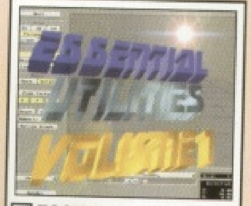

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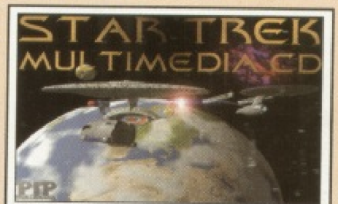

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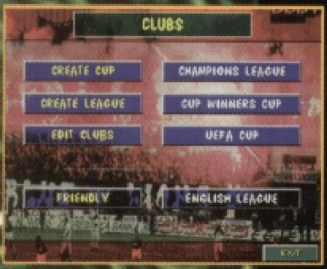
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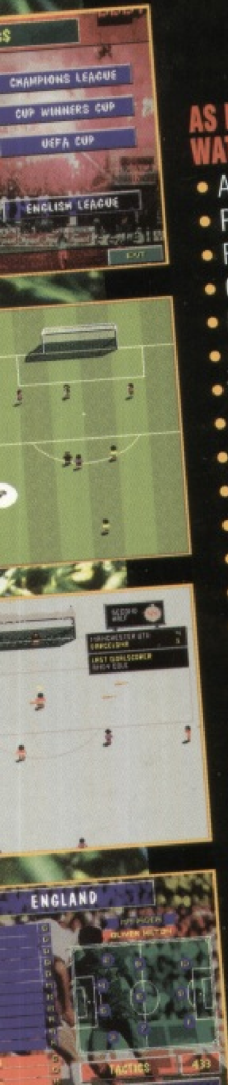

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JUNE 1995

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